

December 2000 - Rs. 10

CHANDAMAMA



An Eventful
Christmas Eve
Page 36



CHANDAMAMA

IS GOING PLACES



You have read Vetala stories in
Chandamama for the last 53 years

Now you can see
Vetala on the Net

And many more goodies from Chandamama

Visit
www.schoolnetindia.com



CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 30

December 2000

No. 12

CONTENTS

CHRISTMAS FEATURES

AND JESUS WAS BORN	.....	34
SNOWBOUND SANTA (Puzzle)	.....	35
HOW ARTHUR BECAME KING	.....	36

FICTION

VAJRADEV'S MISTAKE

(New Tales of King Vikram and the Vetal)	.....	7
THE BEGGAR AND THE BARMECIDE (A tale from Arabia)	.....	26
SAMARITAN SAMIR (Comics)	.....	29
HARSH REALITY OF LIFE	.....	40
ADVENTURE IN THE HILLS	.....	42
CHANDU'S CLEVER ACT	.....	45
THE BEST MEDICINE	.....	48
FORGETFULNESS	.....	60

GLIMPSES FROM THE PAST

SAGA OF INDIA - 11	21
--------------------	-------	----

MYTHOLOGY

SAGA OF VISHNU - 7	51
--------------------	-------	----

FEATURES

CHILDREN IN THE NEWS	14
----------------------	-------	----

BORN THIS MONTH :

BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD	16
----------------------	-------	----

MANY HORIZONS - RUSKIN BOND : THE SNAKE-CHARMER'S DAUGHTER	17
---	-------	----

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES :

THE MYSTIFYING CREATURE OF THE LAND OF SNOWS	56
---	-------	----

LET US KNOW	64
-------------	-------	----

CONTESTS

CREATIVE CONTEST	62
------------------	-------	----

THE GURU'S ADVICE	63
-------------------	-------	----

(Prizewinning entry)	65
----------------------	-------	----

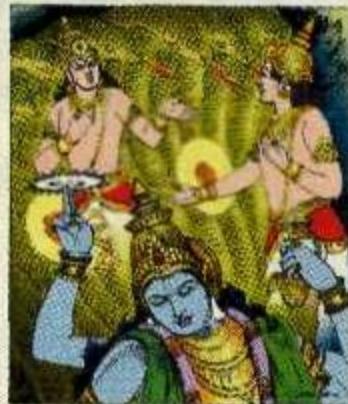
DISCOVERY OF INDIA - QUIZ	66
---------------------------	-------	----

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST	66
-----------------------	-------	----

Printed and Published by B. Viswanatha Reddi at B.N.K Press Pvt. Ltd., Chennai-600 026 on behalf of Chandamama India Limited, No.82, Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097. Editor: Viswam



HIGHLIGHTS



**Saga
of
Vishnu**



Saga of India



**The Snake-charmer's
Daughter**



CONTESTS GALORE

Creative, challenging and educative — calling for your participation.



THE MOST
ENDEARING
GIFT
YOU CAN
THINK OF
FOR YOUR
NEAR AND DEAR ONES
FAR AWAY



CHANDAMAMA

GIVE THEM
A
MAGAZINE
IN THE LANGUAGE
OF THEIR CHOICE

ASSAMESE, BENGALI, ENGLISH, GUJARATI, HINDI, KANNADA,
MALAYALAM, MARATHI, ORIYA, SANSKRIT, TAMIL AND TELUGU

AND LET THEM ENJOY THE WARMTH
OF THE HOME AWAY FROM HOME

SUBSCRIPTION

BY AIR MAIL TO ALL COUNTRIES Twelve issues Rs. 900
BY SURFACE MAIL WITHIN INDIA Twelve issues Rs. 120

Send your remittances
by Demand Draft or Money Order
avouring 'Chandamama India Limited'
to:

PUBLICATION DIVISION
CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED
New 82 (Old 92), Defence Officers Colony,
Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097

Editor
VISWAM

Editorial Advisors
RUSKIN BOND
MANOJ DAS

Consultant Editor
K. RAMAKRISHNAN

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO:

Chandamama Magazine
Division
New 82 (Old 92)
Defence Officers Colony
Ekkatuthangal
Chennai - 600 097
e-mail: chandamama@vsnl.com

For USA
Single copy \$2
Annual subscription \$20

*Mail remittances to
INDIA ABROAD*
43 West 24th Street
New York, NY 10010
Tel: (212) 929-1727
Fax (212) 627-9503

the stories, articles and designs
contained in this issue are the
exclusive property of the
Publishers and copying or
adapting them in any manner/
medium will be dealt with
according to law.

Our next issue is being planned as the Millennium issue, with a special feature on India - half century before Independence and half century afterwards. You will want to preserve your copy for years. A planner for 2001 will be an additional attraction, exclusively for SUBSCRIBERS. So, it's time to think of a regular subscription. Hurry with your payment by M.O./Bank draft.





Founded by

B. Nagi Reddi and Chakrapani

FAREWELL TO A YEAR

The year 2000, which began with much hullabaloo and fanfare, is coming to an end. Many insisted that the year marked the beginning of the 21st century as well as that of a new millennium. Some others differed. According to the latter, the new century and the new millennium would commence only from January 2001.

Now that the year 2000 is over, there is no reason why we should not look upon the coming year as a memorable one in history, marking the beginning of a new era. Beneath our enthusiasm to welcome a new century or millennium remains something very happy and healthy. That is our hope for a new world, a new era, a new time.

The irony is, left to itself, time is neither good nor bad. Time has no age. Time is not just 2000 years old. Nobody can count the age of time. We the human beings have measured it according to our decision. It is not a new century or a new millennium which can by itself mean good or bad for us. All depends on what we make of it.

There is nothing wrong in our feeling excited about the beginning of a new century as long as we are resolved to contribute our best to it, individually.

That is what we shall do. We gratefully bid good-bye to the receding year for whatever experience it has given us, for whatever we have learnt from it.

ON COMPLETION OF ONE YEAR

Chandamama was re-launched one year ago. It was a happy event for all of us. Dear readers, you have since had the opportunity to hold in your hands 12 issues of your favourite magazine in as many months. How did you feel? Your patient wait did not go waste, and we are sure we did not disappoint you. Whatever you remembered of *Chandamama* was there again — like the ever exciting Vikram-Vetala stories, mythology, folk tales, tales of fantasy, all of which reflect the great heritage of our land, and stories from other lands — and also features which some of you had wished for as expressed in your letters. We have also given you comics, the whole story of the Olympics in graphic form, and, probably for the first time, children's creative efforts in writing as well as illustrating the pages. We refer to the Children's Special issue last month.

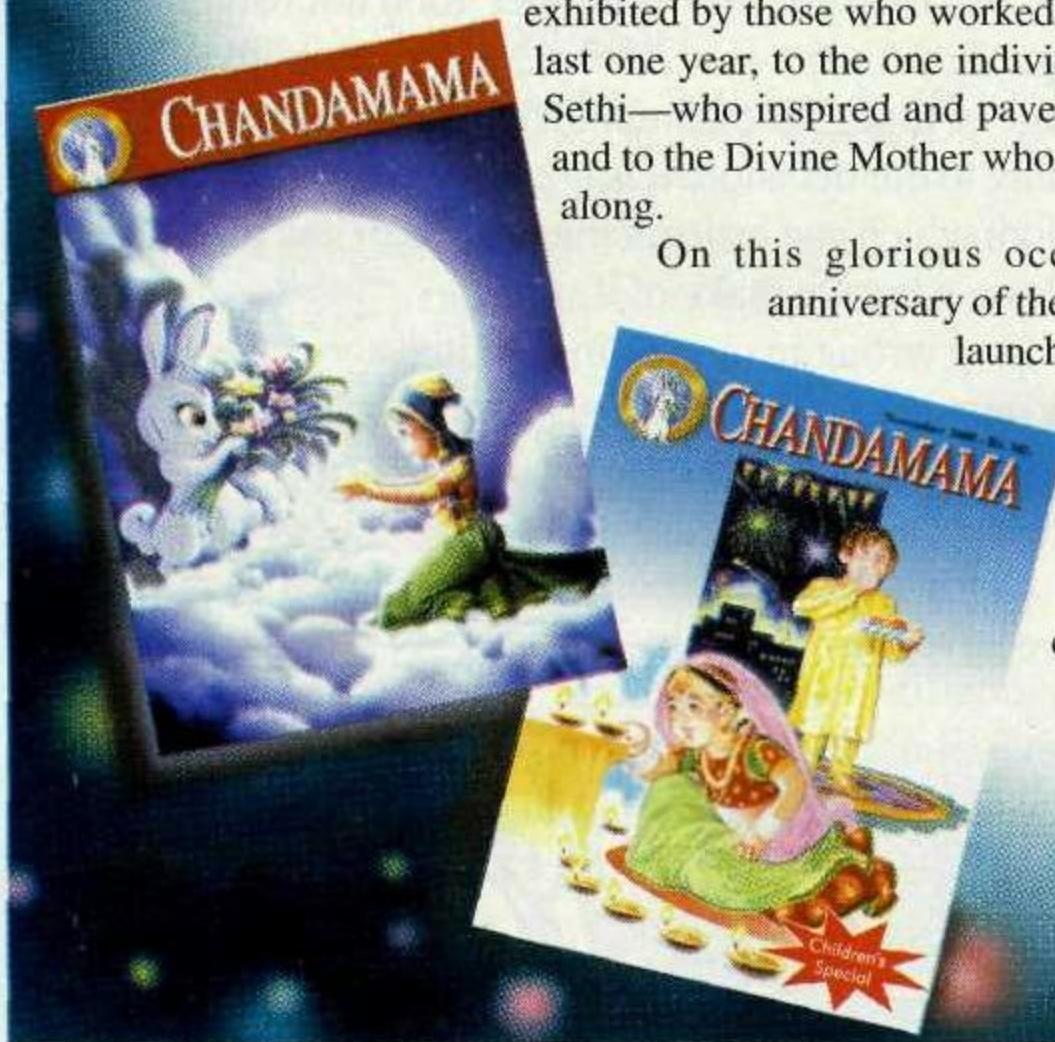
In this age of information technology and the fast advances taking place in that sphere of activity, it is only natural that *Chandamama*, with the moral support of its well-wishers within the country and elsewhere, also decided to venture into new pastures, like syndication and teleserials—website and feature films to be added to that list very soon — under the umbrella of that magic name *Chandamama*.

That means, *Chandamama* has captured its past glory—all thanks to our loyal readers whose number has been increasing day by day, to our numerous well-wishers who stood by us thick and thin, to the team spirit exhibited by those who worked for the success of the last one year, to the one individual - our dear Vinod Sethi—who inspired and paved the way for all this, and to the Divine Mother who graced the venture all along.

On this glorious occasion, of the first anniversary of the magazine after its re-launching, we greet each and

every member of the large *Chandamama* family, and dedicate this issue to the future generation of the country.

B. Viswanatha Reddi
Publisher

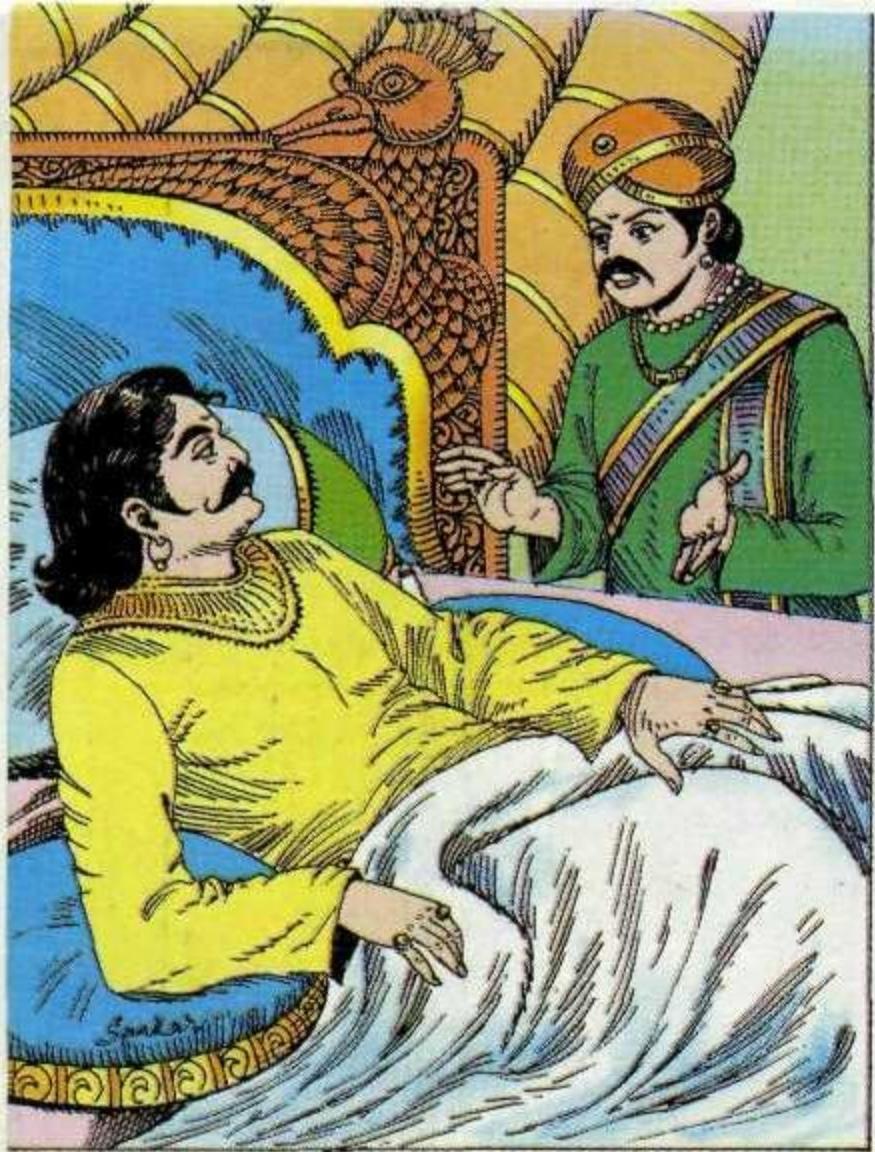


New tales of
King Vikram
and the Vetala!

VAJRADEV MISTAKI

Dark was the night and wet atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and the moans of jackals could be heard the sounds of the laughter of

King Vikramaditya again made his way to the tree where the Vetala hung a branch with the corpse. He climbed the tree, cut the branch down, placed it on his shoulder and made his way through the forest to the desolate graveyard. As he walked, the Vetala possessed the corpse, and said, "O King," he said, "I'm



trying to make you see reason. But don't think you can defeat me with your stubbornness. I'm every bit as adamant as you are and won't accept defeat so easily. I had told you several times that there are many wild and dangerous animals in this thick forest. They can attack you any moment. It's the middle of the night, and yet you persevere in your task. I really have a great deal of pity for you. I'm also surprised that in spite of failure so many times, you haven't given up. You're not discouraged and don't show any impatience. Yet, remember one thing; it's good to be patient and brave, but you must also be wise and knowledgeable. If you are not, all your efforts will be

wasted. Let me tell you the story of a great minister called Majli Bhatt and an incomparably brave man called Vajradev. The story will also help you relax and get over your fatigue."

The Vetala then began his narration.

Mahipal was the King of Magadha. He was a great administrator. Perhaps no other king was as good at keeping an eye on his enemies and putting a check on any of their ambitious plans of attack.

Grahanagiri was the kingdom next to Magadha. King Raja Kunjar desperately wanted to add Magadha to his empire. It was a longstanding desire of his. But Mahipal was too clever for him, and none of his plans, plots or conspiracies worked. After many attempts, he realised that he would never be able to conquer Magadha. He became really discouraged and depressed. In fact, he took it so much to heart that he fell quite ill.

At that point Raja Kunjar's minister Majli Bhatt said : "Your Majesty, Magadha may be very powerful but that does not mean we can't conquer it. Take heart. I've a good plan to deal with the problem. I shall go in disguise and create confusion and anarchy in that kingdom. When King Mahipal gets busy trying to sort out his problems, you should attack him. You'll surely be able to conquer him then."

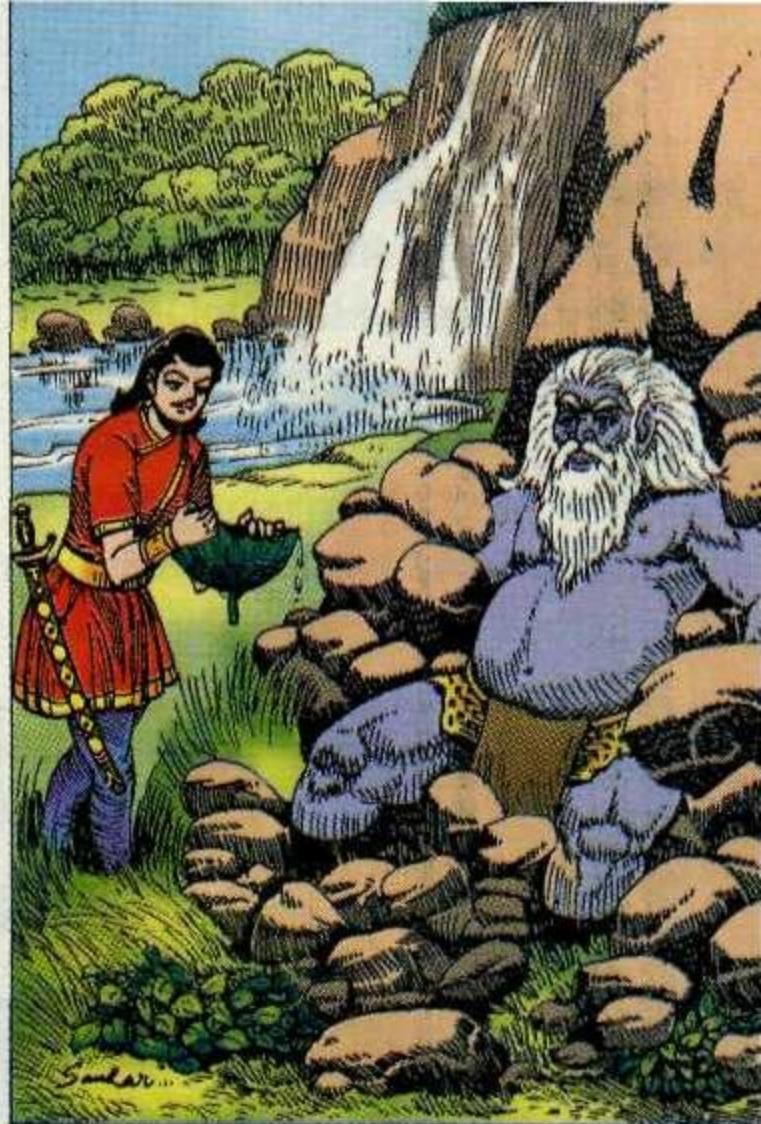


The next day Majli Bhatt set out for Magadha to carry out his plan.

At that time Magadha's general who had been ill for sometime died. The king had to choose another general for the army. He held a meeting with his ministers to discuss the matter. At that time he was told by his spies that a scoundrel called Bhairav had been regularly cheating the citizens of Magadha and had made a lot of money. His victims had finally lost patience and they had got together and beaten him up and threatened to kill him. Fearing for his life he had run away to the jungles.

Raja Kunjar was informed that Bhairav had told all the citizens that there was a Rakshasa belonging to the treta yuga times when Sri Rama ruled Ayodhya. It was believed that this demon had even fought Rama and lost his legs. After that he became a devotee of Rama and had been blessed by him. The people were carried away by this story and went into the jungle to see this Rakshasa. Many turned back frightened by the wild animals but many others did reach the jungle though they never came back.

Mahipal was intrigued and also quite upset by this story. He told his ministers : "I would like to know what actually is taking place in that jungle. You may announce that whoever finds out the truth of the matter and is able to protect the



people, will prove himself worthy of being the next general of Magadha's army. We will appoint him the general. We'll be able to solve this problem and also find for ourselves an able commander."

The ministers did as the king desired.

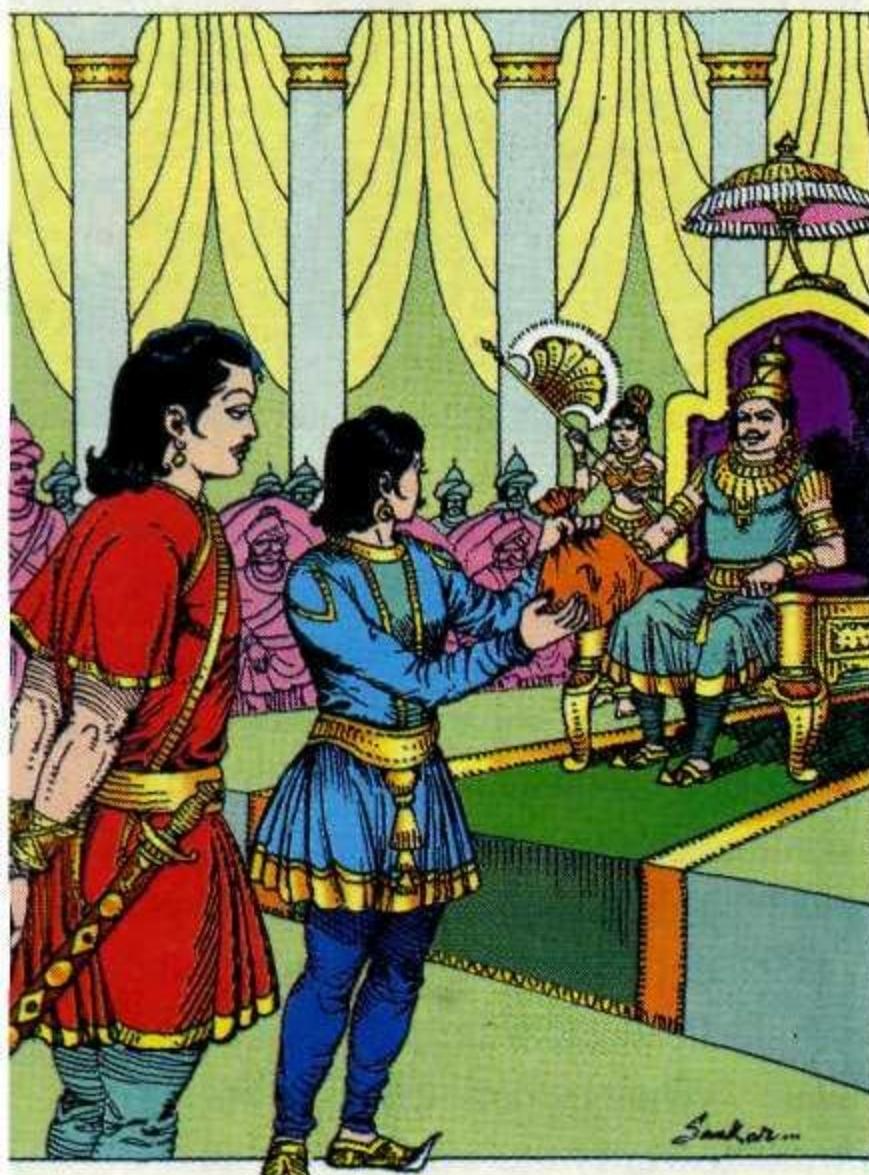
When Bhairav was hiding in the jungle, he heard a faint voice asking for water. When he parted the bushes and went towards the voice, he found a Rakshasa weak with hunger and thirst pinned under a rock. He took pity on him and gave him some water and then rolled away the rock to set him free. The Rakshasa thanked him and told him that his brother had pushed the rock to kill him because he wanted to be the sole



master of the jungle.

"I shall never forget what you've done for me," the Rakshasa told Bhairav. "Please ask anything of me and if it is within my powers, I will surely give it to you."

Bhairav looked at the old Rakshasa who was quite lame. "What do you think



you can give me? What I want is a lot of money and riches."

"How can I get riches in the jungle?" asked the Rakshasa. "Nobody ever comes here."

When he heard the Rakshasa say that, Bhairav thought up a wicked plan.

"That's no problem. I know how to bring many people here and you can kill and eat them. My only condition is, you must hand over all the money and jewels."

The Rakshasa was very excited. "I haven't had human flesh for a very long time because no humans come here and I can't go anywhere, so I agree to your condition."

That was why Bhairav had spread such a story about the treta yuga Rakshasa in the jungle.

Now many people had heard King Mahipal's announcement. Among them was a young person called Prithvi who was a childhood friend of the crown prince. He decided to try his luck. He went into the jungle to find out what exactly was happening. As he wandered about, he chanced upon the place where the Rakshasa lived but he did not confront him immediately. He decided to wait and watch and so hid behind a tree.

That day, nobody came into the jungle. But as Prithvi watched, he saw Bhairav coming in with a big bag. He went straight to the Rakshasa who dug out the jewels and money he had collected and gave them to Bhairav. Prithvi now followed Bhairav out of the jungle, caught hold of him and took him straight to the king. He had found out all about Bhairav's wicked plan and



revealed everything to King Mahipal.

"O King," he said, "if the people come to know of Bhairav's wickedness and his plan, no one will go to the jungle and therefore they will be safe. The demon is lame and cannot move out of the jungle."

King Mahipal was very pleased with Prithvi because he had managed to discover the truth and sort out the problem without using any violence or force. He praised Prithvi and imprisoned Bhairav.

The next day, as King Mahipal was making arrangements to announce the appointment of Prithvi as the new general, a man called Vajradev came in carrying the head of the Rakshasa. Holding up the head he said, "Your Majesty, I've brought the head of the wicked Rakshasa who was preying on our people and killing them in the jungle."

Behind him were many of his friends and admirers. Vajradev's father Gyanamuni was a well-known citizen of Magadha. He had established schools, and many of Magadha's foremost scholars and prominent people had been educated by him. He was looked upon with great respect by the people.

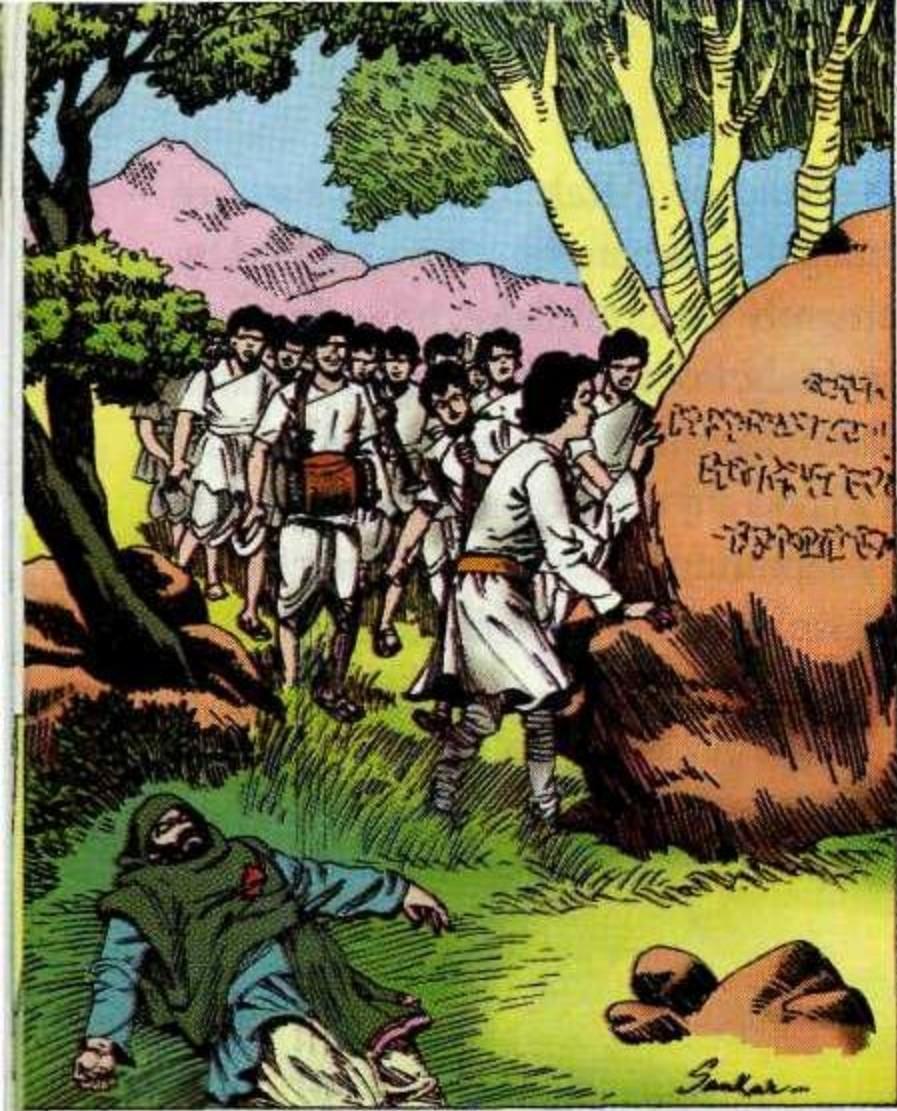
Mahipal looking at the head held by Vajradev was quiet for a while as he pondered the issue. Then he said, "Vajradev, someone has already solved the problem before you. You have cut off

the head of a Rakshasa who had not thought of the harmful scheme; indeed, by himself he could not have harmed anybody. Prithvi, in fact, caught the brain behind the whole mischief. Besides, he did it without any unnecessary violence. I think, by capturing Bhairav and putting him in jail we've solved the problem very neatly."



The king's words enraged Vajradev's followers. They protested loudly but Vajradev consoled them and went away from there. Majli Bhatt in disguise was one of Vajradev's followers and he decided that this was a good opportunity to do what he had come to Magadha





for. He fanned the fire of discontent in Vajradev and told him, "Prithvi is the crown prince's friend and that is why the king wants to make him the general. I've a good plan to ensure that he has a change of mind. If you leave everything to me, you will become the general."

The next day as instructed by Majli Bhatt, Vajradev's followers kidnapped a few prominent citizens and officials of Magadha and sent word to the king that unless Vajradev was made the general, all those who had been kidnapped would be killed.

King Mahipal told his spies to find out everything about Vajradev and his gang. Within two days, information came in that behind Vajradev's treason was the hand of Grahanagiri's

minister Majli Bhatt. He was trying to sow deeds of discontent and anarchy in the kingdom. Vajradev and his followers were mere puppets in his hands.

The king, after a long and serious meeting with his ministers, announced that Vajradev would be appointed the general instead of Prithvi. The announcement pleased Vajradev's followers. They went to Vajradev's house to take him in a victory procession to the palace. There they only found the dead body of Majli Bhatt and a note. Vajradev had disappeared. The note said : "*Friends, I am not worthy of the post of general. I have punished the traitorous conspirator Majli Bhatt for his deeds that have spread discontent among us. I'm leaving this country.*"

The Vetala stopped his narration there. He turned to King Vikram. "O King, Mahipal should have punished Vajradev severely because he had committed a treacherous act by conspiring against the king's orders and decision and spreading rebellion. Instead, he announced that he would make him general. Doesn't this present the king as a coward? Yet Vajradev, instead of rejoicing in his victory and gladly accepting the post, chose to run away from the country. Doesn't that seem an act of a foolish and unintelligent



man? Why did he kill Majli Bhatt? After all he would have become the general only because of him. If you know the correct answers to my doubts and yet refuse to speak, your head will explode into smithereens."

Vikram said : "The announcement of Vajradev's appointment does not show King Mahipal's cowardice or weakness but only his political acumen. If he had impulsively sent the army in to capture and destroy Vajradev and his followers, those kidnapped also might have been killed. On the other hand, when Vajradev and his followers, drunk with victory, came to the palace, it would have been possible to isolate and arrest them. With this action the king avoided a lot of bloodshed.

"Vajradev was without doubt a brave and noble person. When his followers agitated against the king's

decision, he quietened them and went away quietly. He was misled by Majli Bhatt and momentarily taken in by his words. He lost his judgement in the desire to become a general. As soon as he heard the king's announcement, he came to his senses and realised that he had committed a serious crime against the king and country. He knew that Mahipal was a wise and just king. He also knew he would be caught if he entered the palace. Therefore, he wisely left the country. He killed Majli Bhatt because he thought he was an enemy of the state and he was the one who had got him into this difficult situation."

King Vikram had broken his silence. The Vetala once again took off along with the corpse and disappeared. The King drew his sword and went after the Vetala.



Children IN THE NEWS

PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR IS A BOY



Do you know who President Alfonso Portillo of Guatemala turns to for advice on matters of education and environment? None other than 13-year old Samuel Esteban Gomez. The boy has even been attending cabinet meetings as a special invitee. Called a prodigy, this school student is already taking advance courses in mathematics at a university in Guatemala City. He aims to take up aeronautical engineering. He had had a chance to participate in political activities like 'president for a day' and 'Congressional president (similar to Lok Sabha Speaker) for a day'.

Samuel is also no novice to international diplomacy. He had meetings with U.S. President Clinton, Prince Filipe, heir to the Spanish throne, and Mr. Alvaro Arzu before he demitted office as President of Guatemala early this year. The boy is promoting scholastic cooperatives and internships through the ministry of education. In Canada, two Indian students – Puneet Chehal of Surrey and Sultan Sandur of Kamloops - are among eight advisers to the Minister of Education, Ms. Penny Priddy.

YOUNGEST MAGICIAN

Satish Deshmukh is an internationally renowned magician. In his repertoire, the item called *The Illusion* is presented by his 3-year old daughter Princess Kimaya, who thus claims the title of the youngest magician in the world. The girl had, earlier, earned fame by co-acting with Bombay's latest film hero Hritik Roshan.



CALL THEM PRODIGIES?

- Justin Chapman is only 6 years. He began reading when he was two, and has now joined three college classes at the University of Rochester. He wrote a paper on Homer's the *Iliad* and earned a B Grade; he has now taken up an introductory course in history.
- Emmett/Furla films, producing "Camp Grizzly" in Los Angeles, had to go for a smaller size Director's chair, because the Director they have chosen for this family movie is Chaille Stovall who is only 11 years old.
- Twelve-year-old Rashid had been surprising Muslim congregations in Wayanad in Kerala, where he gives religious discourses during the Ramzan month. He can give speeches fluently in English, Urdu, Arabic, and Hindi.



BOY LAUNCHES FOUR WEBSITES

Four years ago, A.V.Dinesh, a 11th Standard student of Chennai, cleared two examinations conducted by Microsoft. He was 12 then. After that, he has been busy designing websites for different categories of people, and by now he has put out as many as 4,000 pages of online content. **SpicyKids.com** is for children; **TeenageTigers.com** is aimed at teenagers, while **DevelopersInfoway.com** is meant for programmers. **Dinesh World.com** provides links to a variety of sites.



BORN THIS MONTH

On the 3rd of December, in the year 1884, was born in Bihar the child who was to become the first President of the Republic of India, famous as Babu Rajendra Prasad.

Rajendra Prasad was educated under the University of Calcutta, from where he moved to Patna. There he began to practise law and very soon became one of the leading lawyers in the High Court. But his mind was beset with the fate of his motherland which was under the British masters. In 1917, he came in touch with Mahatma Gandhi who led a Satyagraha at Champaran in Bihar. Before long, he bade good-bye to his flourishing legal practice and joined the non-cooperation movement.

Soon he was a leader in his own right and, in 1922, became the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress. He proved highly prudent and popular. No wonder he was chosen the President of the Congress again and again- in 1934, 1939, and 1947.

When, in 1946, the Constituent

Assembly was formed to draft a constitution for independent India, he was chosen to preside over it. His contribution to the formulation of the Constitution was great.

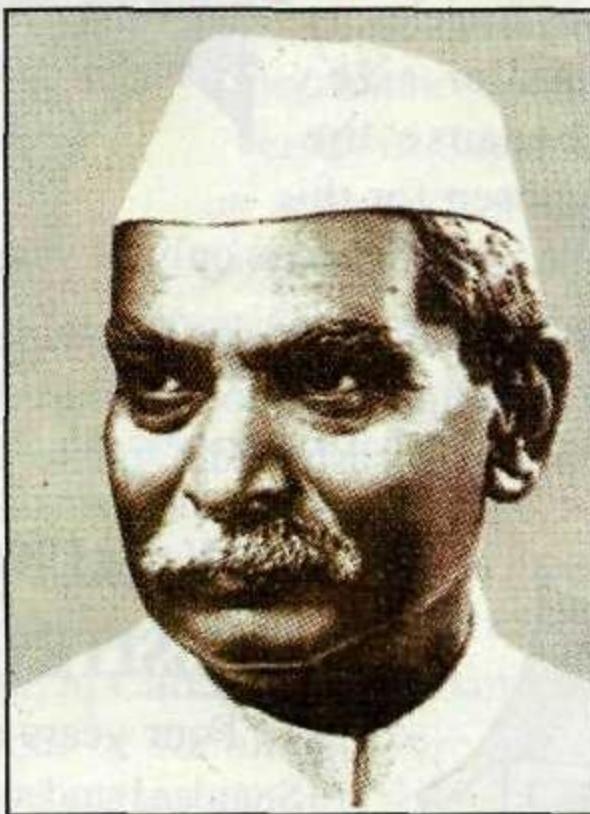
In 1947, he became a minister in the cabinet formed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. When the new Constitution came into operation in 1950, he was

elected the President of the Republic. He continued to hold that lofty position, re-elected in 1952 and 1957, till 1962.

Even after he became President of India, he continued to move with the common people of India. He often toured the land, mostly by rail, stopping at wayside stations to address gatherings, big and small.

On his retirement in 1962, the nation bestowed on him the highest honour, the Bharat Ratna Award. He passed away at Patna on 28 February 1963. Poetess Sarojini Naidu was once requested to write a tribute to Rajen Babu, when she said: "I could do so if I had a pen of gold dipped in a pot of honey, because all the words will not suffice to explain his qualities or adequately pay tribute to his qualities."

BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD



THE SNAKE-CHARMER'S DAUGHTER

Many years ago, a tribal village lay on the banks of a muddy stream amongst the bare, rugged foothills of the Himalayas.

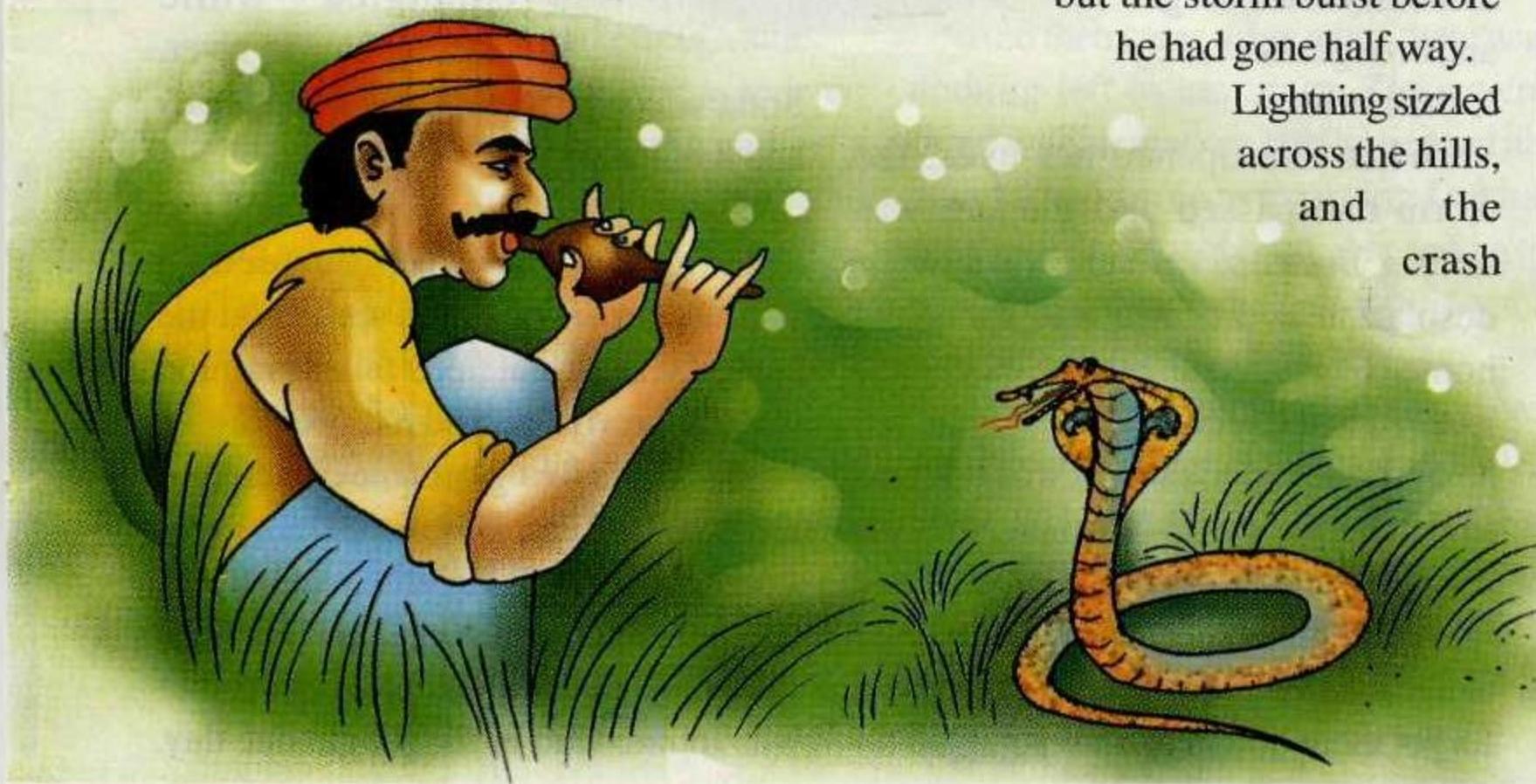
Trading in the skins of lizards and snakes was good in those days, and Hiralal, a snake-charmer, made a fairly good living from his occupation. He was a well-built, handsome man, and the young village girls often cast shy, furtive looks in his direction. But Hiralal went his way without paying much attention to these distractions.

On a day when dark, threatening clouds rolled up from the east, bringing them a strong wind, the villagers looked anxiously at the sky, for, their small crops were in ears and about to mature.

Hiralal, who was wandering far up the hill, playing his pipe in the hope of attracting a snake, heard the thunder and felt the first few drops of rain. At home, the skins lay stretched out in the courtyard, and he knew his brother was probably too drunk to think of taking them in. He began hurrying homewards,

but the storm burst before
he had gone half way.

Lightning sizzled
across the hills,
and the
crash



of thunder rent the air. Hiralal began to run. The stream between him and the village was already swollen, and in a short time it would be a raging torrent, impossible to cross. Tightening and girding up his loin-cloth, he entered the stream in blinding rain, and was almost across when he heard a cry for help.

It was a faint cry, barely heard above the roar of the storm; though the water was rising every moment, Hiralal went in the direction of the cry. He managed to reach her with a great effort, and a little later landed both himself and the girl just below his hut.

She had fainted; Hiralal shouted to his brother, and between them they lifted the girl and brought her safely to their house.

When she opened her eyes, the storm had passed and the sun was shining. But the storm had left in its wake desolation and death; and the girl's home, like several others, had been levelled to the ground.

A month later, the girl was married to Hiralal, the snake-charmer. After the marriage feast, a great dance was held — for, the tribals, once they have offered to the dead a portion of the funeral feast, forget them quickly in the struggle for

existence.

In the following year, a baby girl was born to the couple, and was named Sona, because of her honey-gold complexion. She grew up to a beautiful girl, and offers of marriage kept coming the way of her parents.

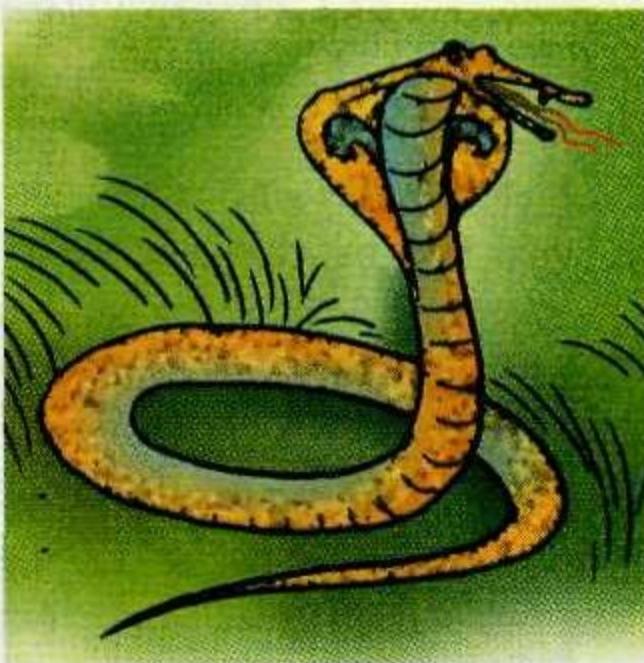
The most tempting proposal was made by Dukha, a drunkard and a bully. Dukha was a rich man, the richest in the village, and Hiralal urged his daughter

to agree to the marriage, but she would not consider Dukha or any other suitor, for her heart belonged to the slim and agile Bhim, a fisherman, in whose net she had once found herself entangled while bathing in the river.

Sona was charmed by his good looks and flashing smile.

By the time Sona had reached the marriageable age of fourteen, a succession of bad years settled on the land, the seasonal rains failed, famine stalked the village, and many died.

Making a living became difficult for Hiralal's family, because snakes and lizards were now scarce, and fewer people bought their skins. Then Hiralal's wife took ill and died; and his brother was found dead in the jungle one day.





MAHE...

Only Hiralal and his daughter were left.

Taking the few skins he had recently cured and dressed, Hiralal set out for a nearby town to try and effect a sale.

While he was away, Sona wandered into the jungle and found a pet — a beautiful baby cobra. She had learnt all about snakes and their ways from her father. Carefully putting the young cobra in her waist-cloth to keep it warm, she returned home.

Hiralal had sold a couple of skins, and they managed to fill their stomachs for a few weeks; but a day came when all their money was finished. They still had their brass utensils left, and they were mortgaged to Dukha, who paid a

price far below their worth.

"I would give you more," he said, "if only Sona were betrothed to me."

And then came a day when there was nothing left to mortgage. They were faced with starvation. Hiralal begged his daughter to agree to marrying Dukha, but the girl was stubborn. According to the tribal custom, the final choice of a husband lay entirely with her.

Meanwhile, Bhim the fisherman had disappeared without warning to try his luck with the net in the glacier-fed streams further north. Sona was sad and lonely. Every morning she went down to the stream, but there was no sign of the fisherman.



Her father kept urging her to marry Dukha, who had now promised to advance Hiralal a hundred rupees and return the mortgaged articles as soon as the engagement was made binding. Sona was in despair.

Finally, weakened by her father's constant pleading, she agreed to the engagement. Dukha was overjoyed and went about the village boasting of his conquest.

One evening, as Sona was feeding her pet snake with some goat milk given to her by a neighbour, a shadow fell across the doorstep. It was Bhim. She clung to the man she loved and poured out her woes; but he was helpless in the matter; because by the rules of the tribe, no man could interfere with the marriage once a girl had given her consent.

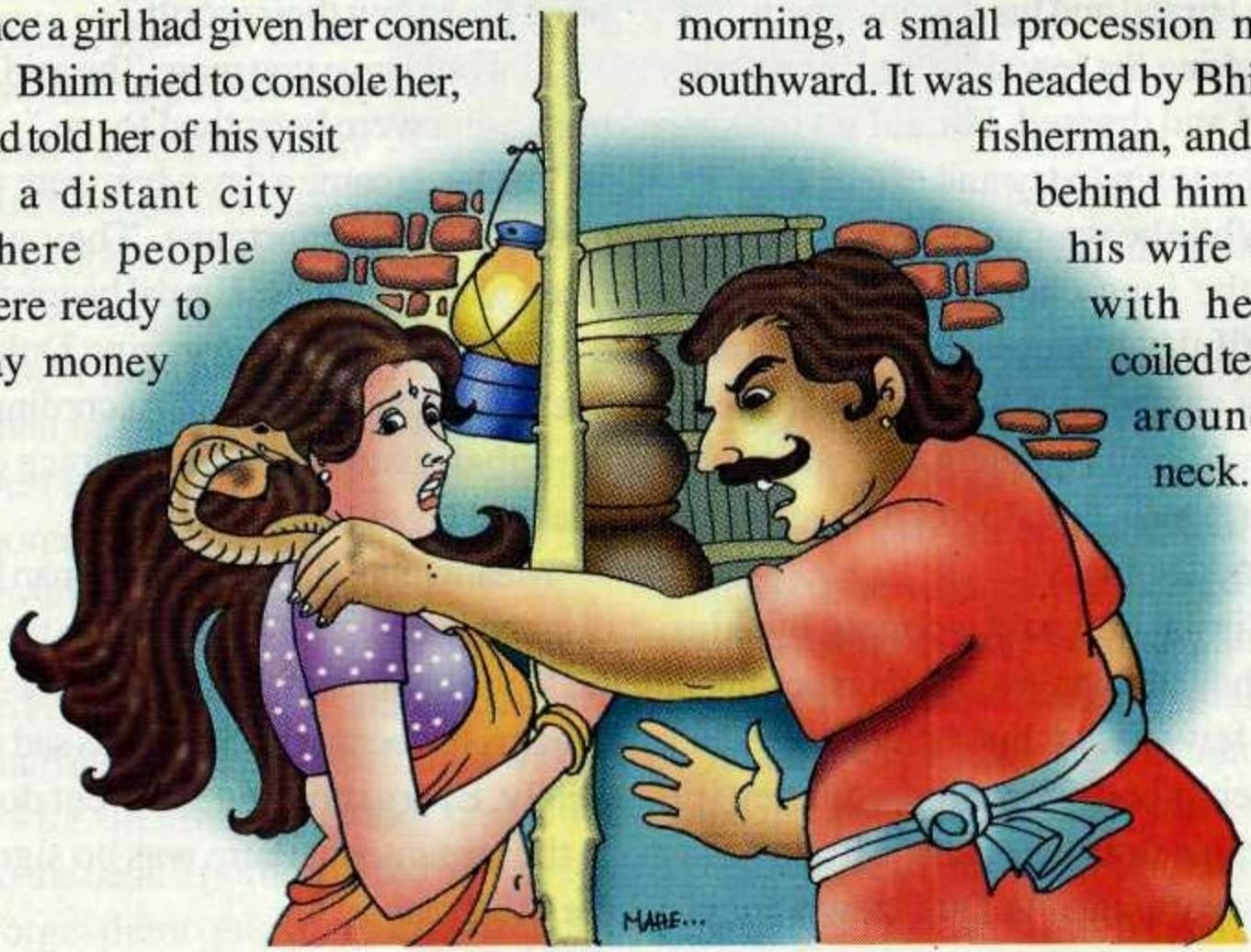
Bhim tried to console her, and told her of his visit to a distant city where people were ready to pay money

to watch a snake respond to the music of the snake-charmer's pipe; perhaps Hiralal could take to training the snakes he caught, instead of skinning them. But all this was of no consolation to the heartbroken girl.

On the day before the marriage, Dukha, blustering and bragging, entered the house. He was drunk and was unaware of the pet snake coiled round Sona's neck. As he caught the girl by the shoulders, a hooded coil darted out towards him and tapped him just once on the wrist.

With a cry of terror, Dukha staggered backwards. He was dead.

The news of better prospects in the distant city filled many villagers with renewed hope, and on a cold winter morning, a small procession moved southward. It was headed by Bhim the fisherman, and close behind him came his wife Sona, with her pet coiled tenderly around her neck.



Saga of India

Glimpses of a great civilisation – its glorious quest for Truth through the ages



11. The Legend of Savitri



It was a Sunday, and Professor Devnath's son, Srikumar, had planned to take the family to a hill-top resort not far from the town, for a change. The professor was happy. But hardly had he finished eating his breakfast when the phone rang.

"Sir, when do we come to listen to the story of Savitri?"

Though the question was articulated by one tender voice, that of Sandip's friend Kishore, the professor could hear several voices buzzing around the phone at the other end.

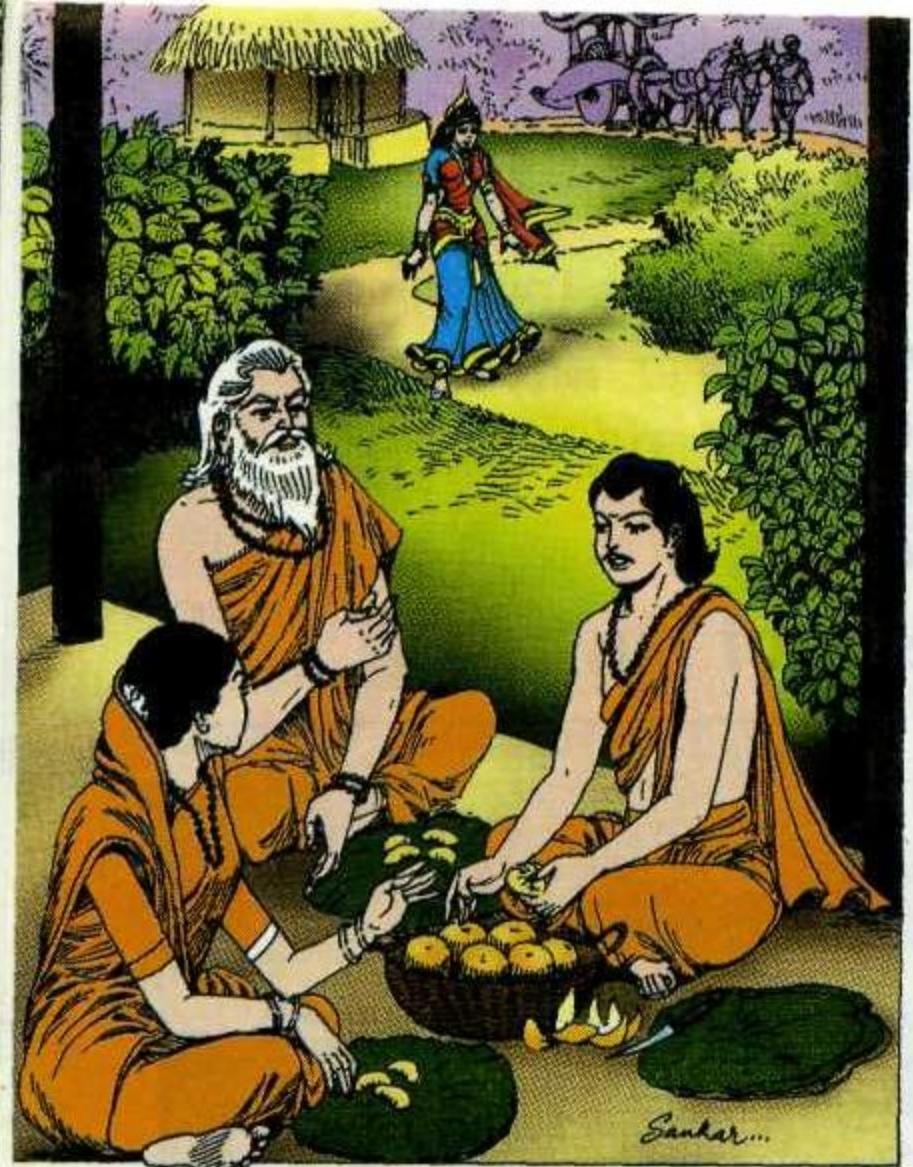
"Well, well..." After a moment's hesitation the professor said again, "does 4 o' clock suit you?"

There were two different reactions to the professor's suggestion. Some invisible hands clapped. It was not difficult to guess who the persons behind the claps were. Chameli and Sandip, though they had not expressed it openly because of their respect for their father's wish, would prefer listening to their grandfather's stories to being at the resort which, in any case, they had visited several times.

"But, father, we're not likely to be back before late in the evening!" his son reminded the professor.

"We better postpone our visit to next Sunday, if it is not inconvenient to you. Curiosity in children, their eagerness to





learn something about our heritage, must receive priority over our desires. I hope, neither you nor my daughter would mind it," said the professor.

He was referring to his daughter-in-law, Jayashree. "Not at all, Baba, it wouldn't make any difference to us," assured the lady.

"It is so considerate of you," Professor Devnath complimented his daughter-in-law and called out to his grandchildren : "You can inform your other friends accordingly," he said. Chameli rushed to plant a kiss on her Grandpa's forehead.

Late in the afternoon, the lawns under the *Krishnachura* tree sprang to life with the children sitting cross-legged in front of the professor. "We're now

on to one of the greatest stories ever told - that of Savitri. She was the princess of Madra. Do you know, Madra is traced to the modern Afghanistan, just as Gandhara, another kingdom of the epic era, is traced to modern Kandahar?" the professor told the children.

"Good God!" exclaimed some of his listeners. "Were those lands a part of India?"

"That is an important question. But you can appreciate the answer only if you have sufficient knowledge of the political geography of ancient times. The Indian sub-continent was known as Jambudwipa. There were so many kingdoms in it. But a kind of spiritual and cultural unity kept them tied to one another. They felt that they had a common destiny. That is why practically all the kings of the sub-continent participated in the Mahabharata war, allied to either the Pandavas or the Kauravas." The professor paused and then said: "But I am expected to narrate a legend to you, not history. Let me return to Savitri." The professor then narrated the story which, in brief, ran like this:

Aswapati, the King of Madra, desired a worthy child for which he prayed to Goddess Savitri. He was blessed with a daughter whom he named Savitri. As the princess grew up, she stunned everybody by her beauty,



modesty, and wisdom and, last but not the least, a radiance which was simply divine.

The king looked for a suitable bridegroom for her. But every eligible young man felt himself too small before her, so much so none of them would even look straight into her eyes. So, one day, the king asked the princess to go out into the wide world and choose her consort herself.

Accompanied by the king's wise ministers Savitri, carried in her charming chariot, moved from land to land and at last reached the frontiers of Shalwa - a kingdom that was a part of the modern Rajputana region. There, in a forest, she met Satyavan, a young man in whom was combined all the qualities that go with the noble and the brave. Satyavan was the prince of Shalwa, but was living in the forest amidst hermits along with his parents. It was because his father, King Dyumatsen, had grown blind and taking advantage of the situation, some of his wicked officials had usurped his kingdom. But Dyumatsen, more a sage than a ruler, lived a contented life in the company of his queen and his son.

It so happened that when Princess Savitri returned to Madra and reported to her parents on the success of her mission, Sage Narada was there. The joy of Savitri's parents at their daughter's joy vanished as Narada revealed to them the cruel fate facing Satyavan - that he was to die on a date exactly after a year!

No wonder Savitri should

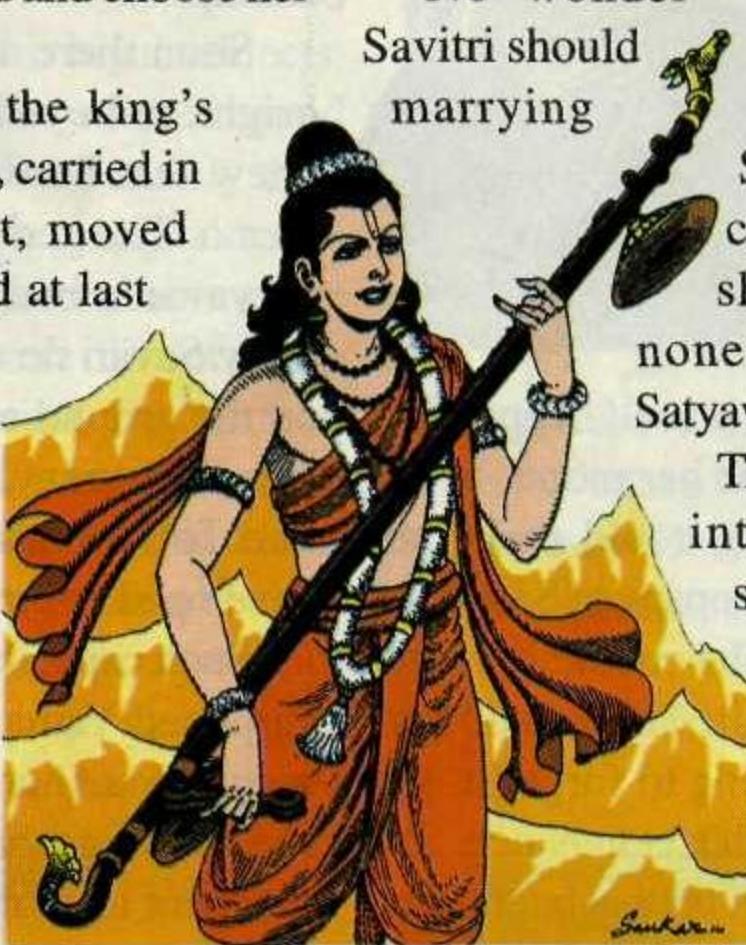
marrying

the fond parents of dissuade her from Satyavan. But Savitri would not change her mind; she would marry none other than Satyavan.

The king, through his intuition, felt somewhat sure that Savitri was no ordinary girl and that she knew how to take care of her own destiny. She led

him to the forest of Shalwa and got her wedded to Satyavan.

Great was the joy of the blind and exiled King Dyumatsen, his queen and, of course, Satyavan with the arrival of Savitri in their hut. Indeed, her presence made even the sages who lived around the royal family extremely happy. With her humility, grace, and dutifulness she became the object of their adoration.





But was Savitri herself happy? It is difficult to describe her mood. In her mortal life nothing could make her happier than the company of Satyavan. At the same time she could not forget the doom that awaited him – and her! Alas, far from trying to forget it, she remembered it with a vengeance. She must prepare herself for that fateful day. And preparation for her did not mean only to gather courage to face the inevitable, but to develop the power to undo the inevitable.

Unknown even to Satyavan, in silence, Savitri went on cultivating the strength within, the spiritual strength, to fight with the ordeal that was coming. The day came at last when Satyavan must die.

That day, as Satyavan got ready to

go into the forest to gather wood, Savitri accompanied him. The delighted Satyavan went on showing to her the different kinds of trees and flowers and the many hidden splendours of the forest. But at mid-day he felt giddy and lay down resting his head on Savitri's lap. Savitri knew what was going to happen. She sat immobile, her mind fixed on the Divine.

Soon there appeared before her a bright, red-eyed godly being. Savitri knew that he was Yama, the god of Death. The god pulled the soul out of Satyavan's body and began to walk away. Savitri slowly put Satyavan's head on the ground and followed the god. Needless to say, she could see the god and follow him because she had developed an inner vision.

Such capacity of Savitri pleasantly surprised Yama. He proposed that he would grant her any boon with which she could go back satisfied, but she must not ask for Satyavan's life.

Savitri asked for the restoration of King Dyumatsen's eyesight as well as his kingdom. The compassionate god granted them. But since Savitri continued to follow him, he offered yet another boon, and yet another. Savitri went on receiving boons which included her remaining ever faithful to Satyavan and becoming mother of his children!

But how could that come about



unless Satyavan was alive?

Yama appeared to have been outwitted. He was thus obliged to restore life to Satyavan. The couple returned to their hut – into the embrace of the anxious king and queen. But even before their reunion, the king had got back his vision and soon the nobles of his court arrived there to welcome him back to his throne, for the usurper had been vanquished by his loyal subjects.

"This is the outline of the legend the *Mahabharata* tells. But why did I refer to it as one of the greatest stories ever told? Because it contains some profound truths. Savitri did not really outwit the god of Death. She, in fact, changed Satyavan's destiny through the power of her spirit. Satyavan himself, as his name suggests, was a man of truth. Both were great souls. We would not have understood this inner meaning of the legend – and there is much, much

more to it – if Sri Aurobindo had not written his epic, *Savitri*. He elevates an ancient legend into a sublime symbol. If the pure and spiritual love of one individual could change the destiny of another, one day the advent of Divine Love can change the destiny of mankind. Once again I need hardly say that man must grow truthful enough to deserve such a destiny!" concluded the professor.

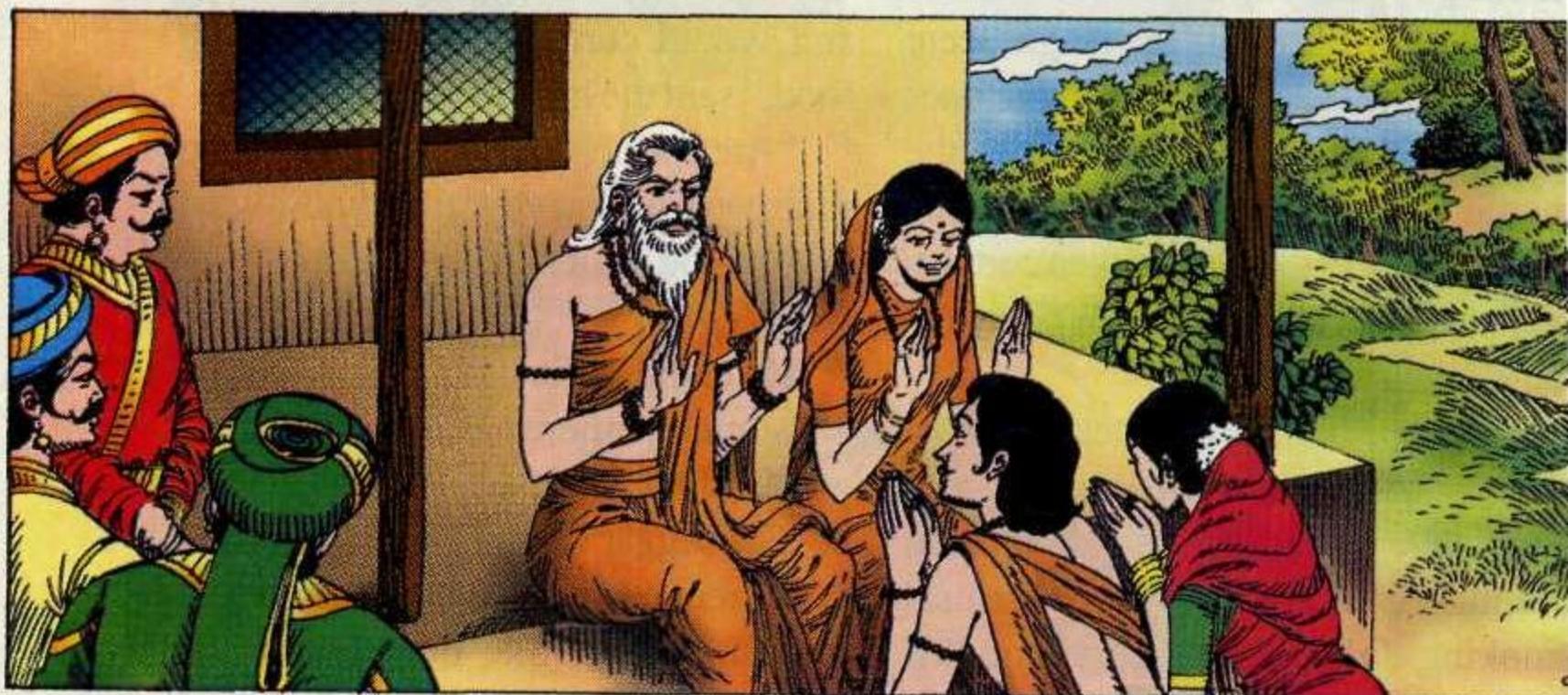
"Grandpa, why not read out *Savitri* to us?" asked an enthusiastic listener.

"My child, you must read that great work yourself when you grow up. Wait, you can begin reading it even when you are young. I must now hurry for my evening walk."

Professor Devnath stood up. So did his little fans, beaming with joy.

Visvavasu

(To continue)



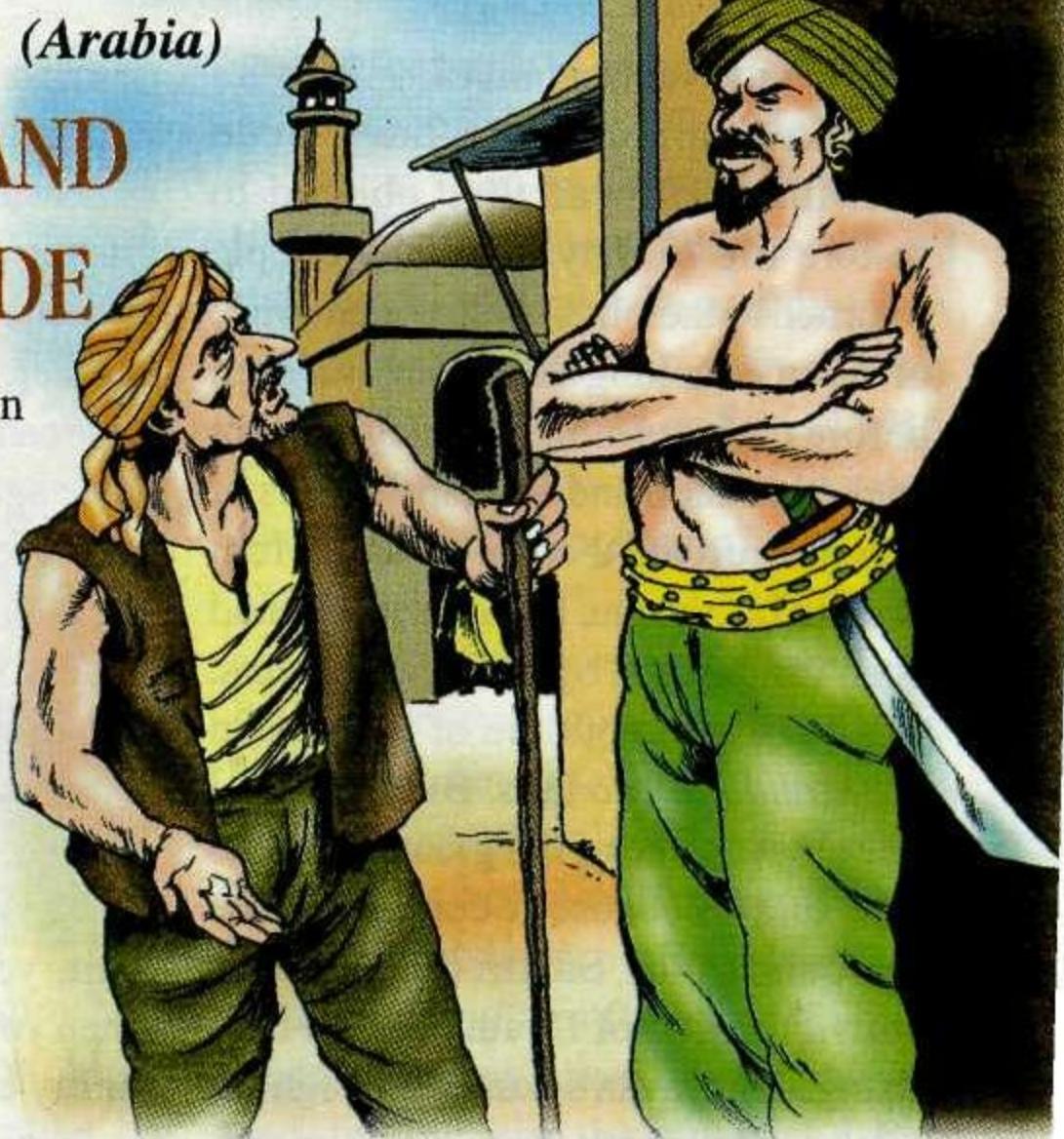
THE BEGGAR AND THE BARMECIDE

Once there was a rich man in Arabia who lost all his wealth. He became so poor that he had to beg for food. One day, as he was walking along the streets, he saw a fine mansion. It had some fierce looking guards at the entrance. The man approached them timidly and asked if they could give him something to eat, for he was very hungry.

"Go into the house," said one of them. "You'll get whatever you need from our master himself."

This surprised the beggar, but he had nothing to lose and so he went in. He found himself standing in a magnificent hall paved with marble. Precious stones were set in exquisite designs on the marble pillars. The floors were covered with rich carpets, and the silken curtains were held back with golden tassels at the windows.

One end of the hall opened onto a room furnished with carpets and cushions covered in rich brocade. An old man with a long white beard sat smoking a *hookah*. As soon as he saw



the beggar, the Barmecide rose and welcomed him courteously and asked him what he could do for him.

"I haven't eaten properly for days and would certainly welcome some food," said the beggar piteously.

"Are you actually hungry? Then you shall certainly eat your fill. I know what it is to be hungry," exclaimed the Barmecide.

He clapped his hands and shouted: "Is someone there? Bring us water to wash our hands."

The beggar was pleasantly surprised at this reception and opened his mouth to thank the noble, but he saw the



Barmecide rubbing his hands together as though he was washing them in a basin of water. No servant had appeared and there was neither a basin nor any water.

However, the beggar felt that it was only polite that he did what his host did and so he, too, pretended to wash his hands. "You must be famished. Let's not stand on ceremony. Do eat. Would you like to start with this fine soup? It is made of almonds and has herbs and spices you could think of."

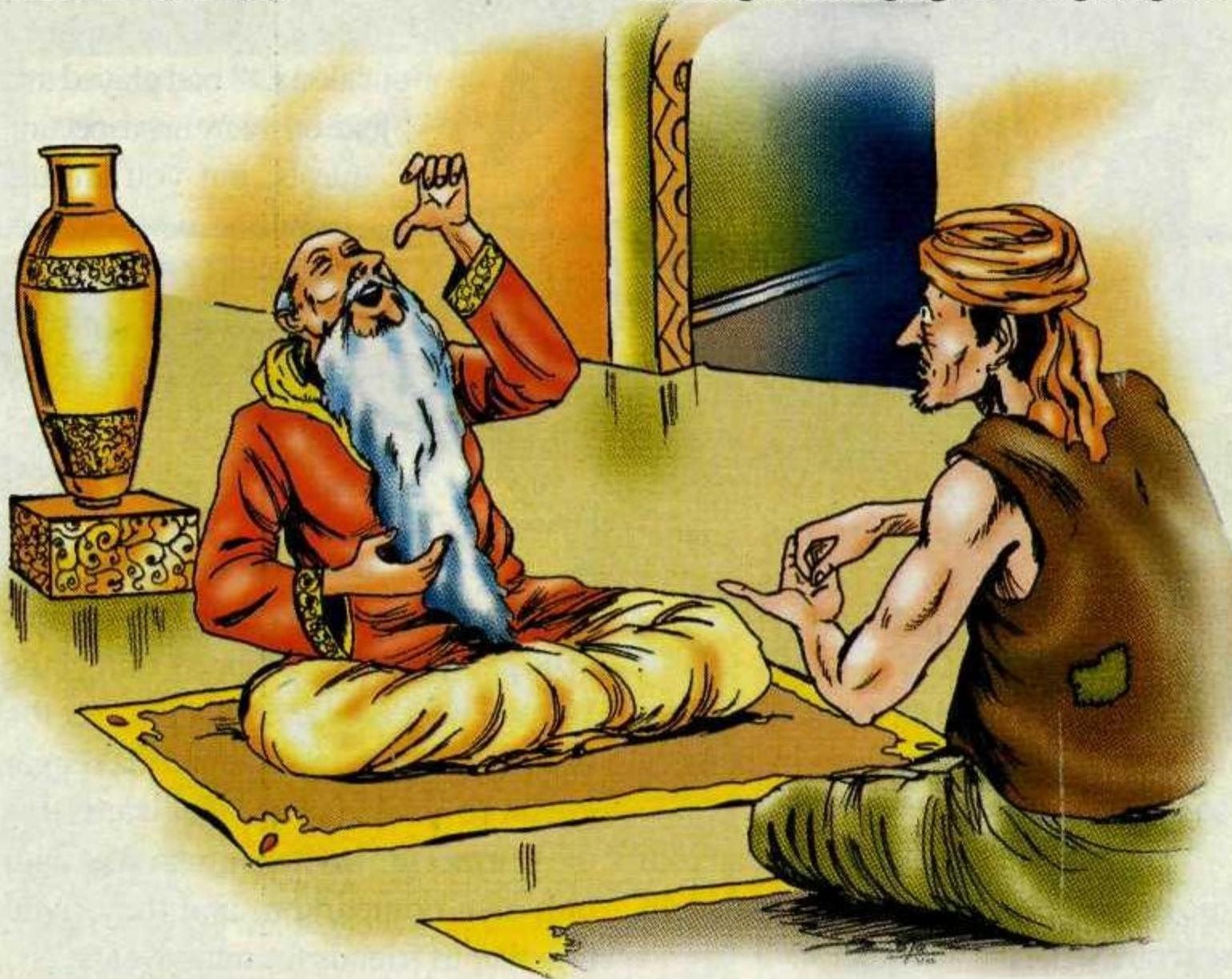
He pretended to pour out the soup into bowls and then made the motions of drinking deeply.

Then he looked at the beggar and said: "Oh! Is it not to your taste? You do not want to drink it? Maybe you would prefer the barley broth flavoured with saffron. Ho 'boy'! Bring some of the barley broth for our guest!"

The beggar was completely puzzled, but he did not want to offend the rich man and so decided to go along with the game and pretended to eat and drink all that was offered.

"Have you ever tasted anything like this chicken stuffed with olives and pistachios?" asked the Barmecide.

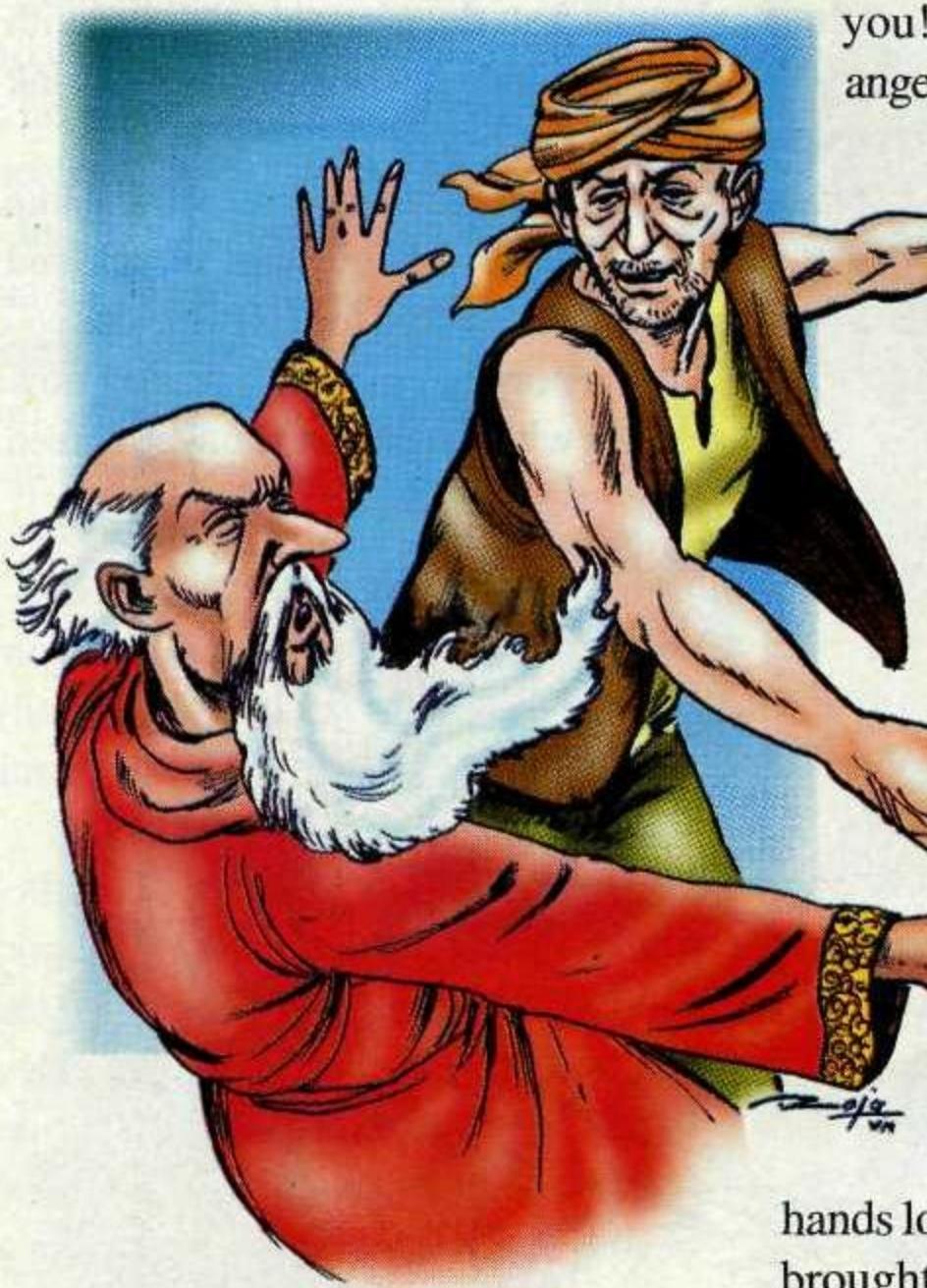
The poor beggar, who was by now fainting with longing and hunger, agreed



to everything the Barmecide said. He praised all the invisible delicacies and pretended to eat heartily.

Finally, the beggar declared he could eat no more. By now he was sick of the joke and wanted to teach the Barmecide a lesson.

The Barmecide in a loud voice called



for wine. "Oh!" said the beggar. "I'm not used to wine. Besides, it is forbidden and so I cannot drink with you."

The Barmecide said: "You can join me in a single glass. This is a very old and rare wine."

So the beggar pretended to drink. When the Barmecide lifted up his hand a second time to take a sip from the invisible glass, the beggar struck him hard on the cheek. The sound of the stinging blow rang sharply around the room.

"What does that mean? How dare you!" shouted the Barmecide in anger.

"Oh! My Lord!" said the beggar. "The rare wine you have given me fuddled my brain so much that I didn't realise what I was doing."

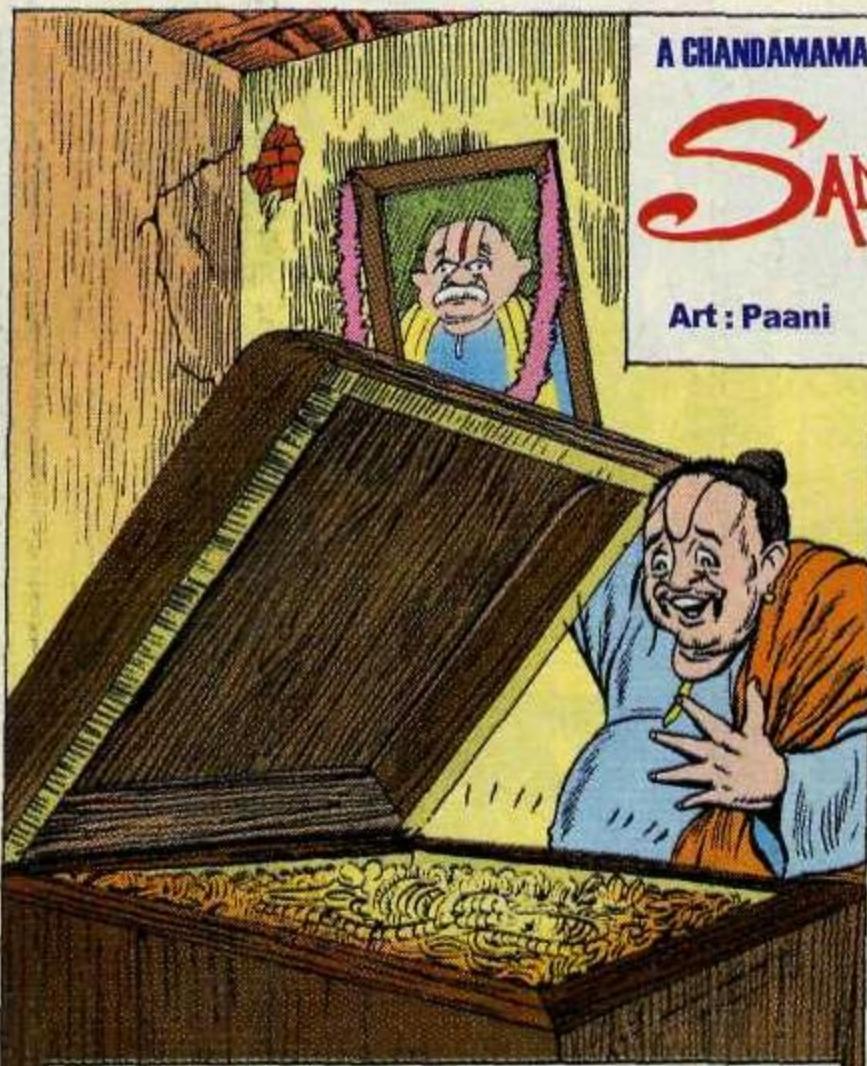
The Barmecide laughed out aloud. "I had played this joke on many unsuspecting guests, but you are the only one who has not only endured it but also given as good as he got. So, I forgive you and you must join me in a real meal."

The Barmecide clapped his hands loudly and this time the servants brought in all the delicious things the Barmecide had pretended to offer the first time. The Barmecide and the beggar got on so well together afterwards that the Barmecide invited him to stay with him as a companion, and they lived together as friends for many years.

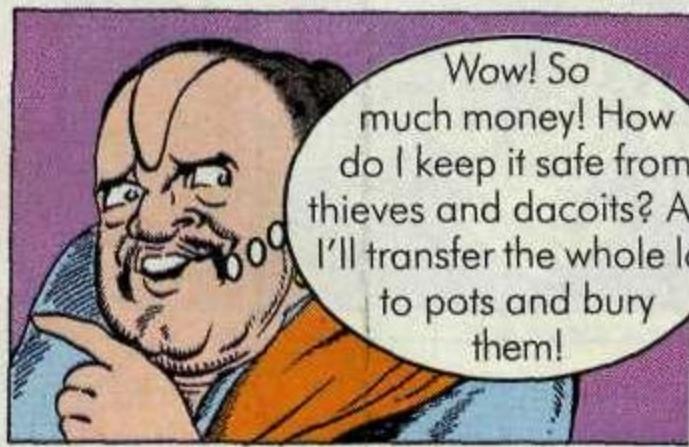


SAMARITAN SAMIR

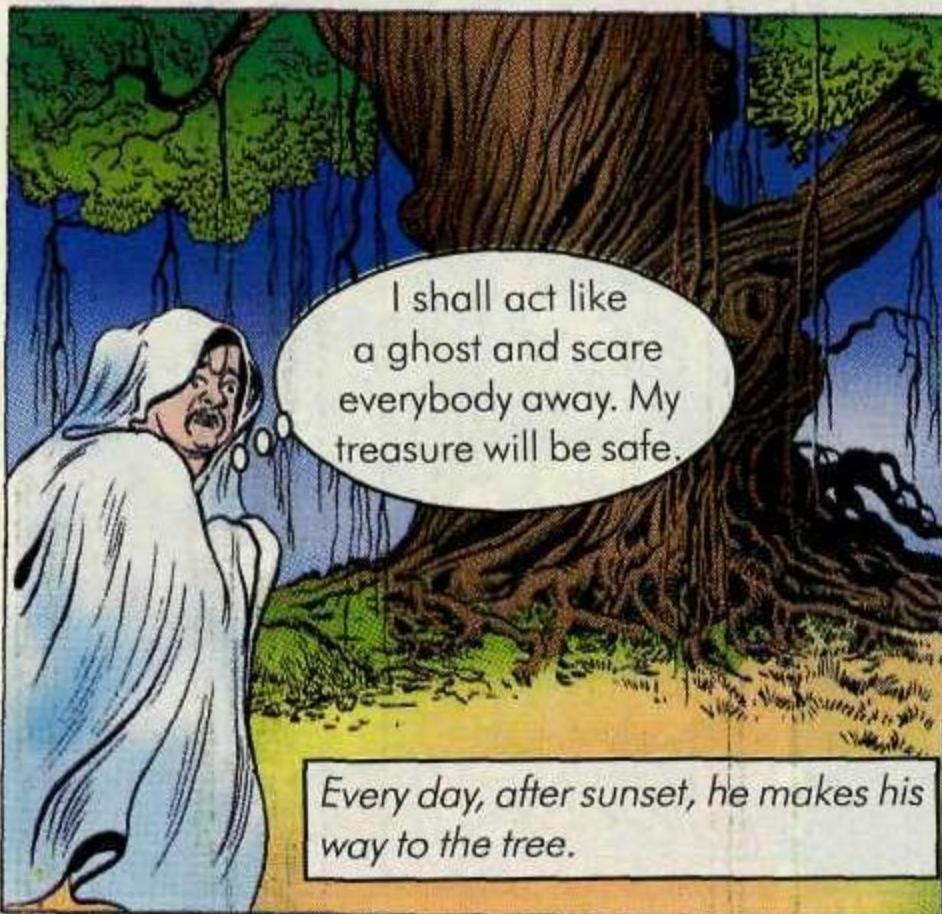
Art : Paani



Moneylender Mangaiah Seth of Mangalpura had passed on all his wealth to his son Govind Seth before his death. A few days later, Govind opens the chest in his father's room.

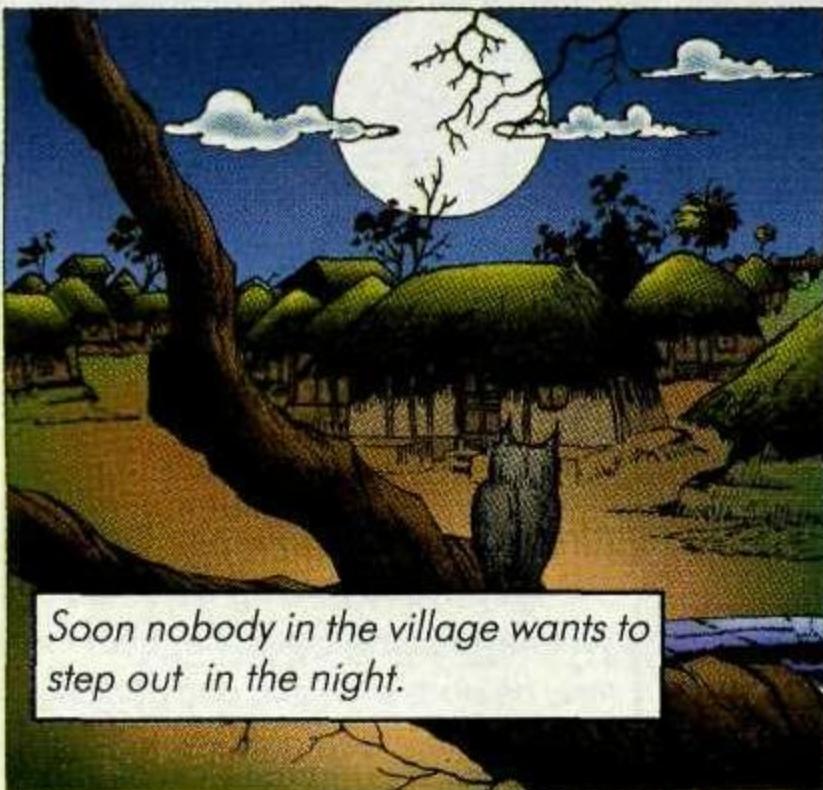
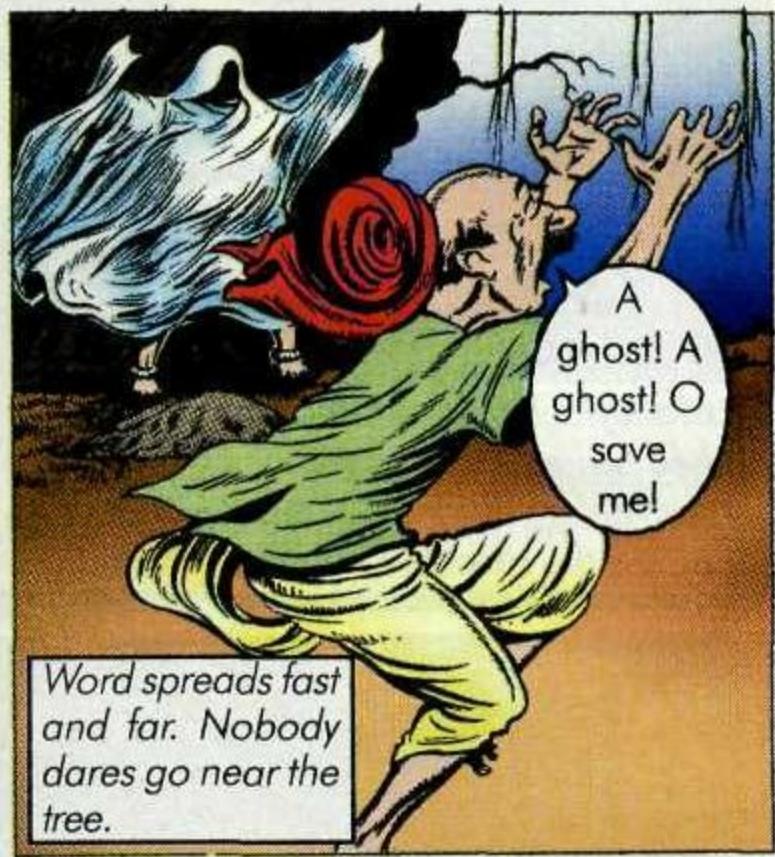
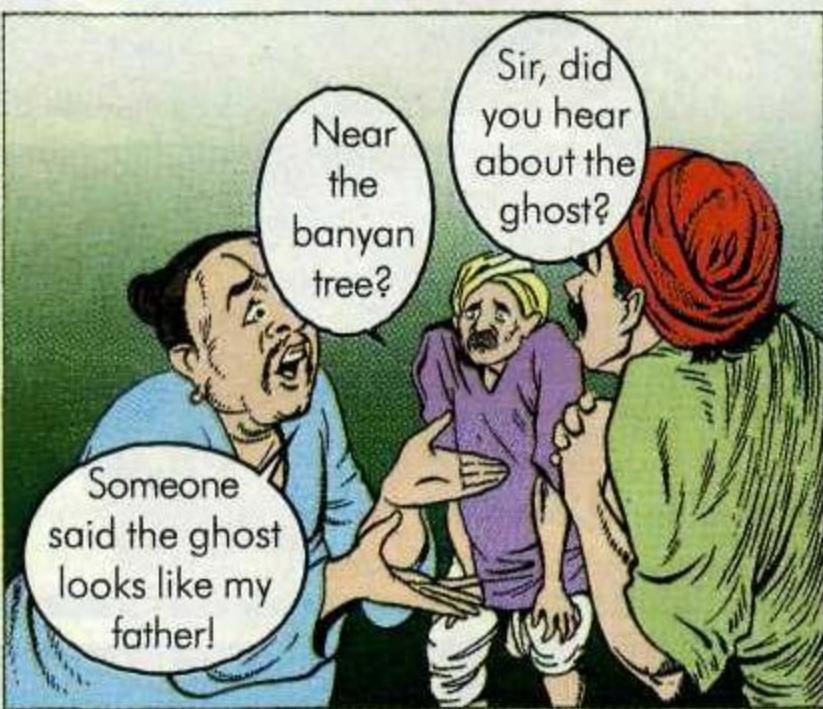
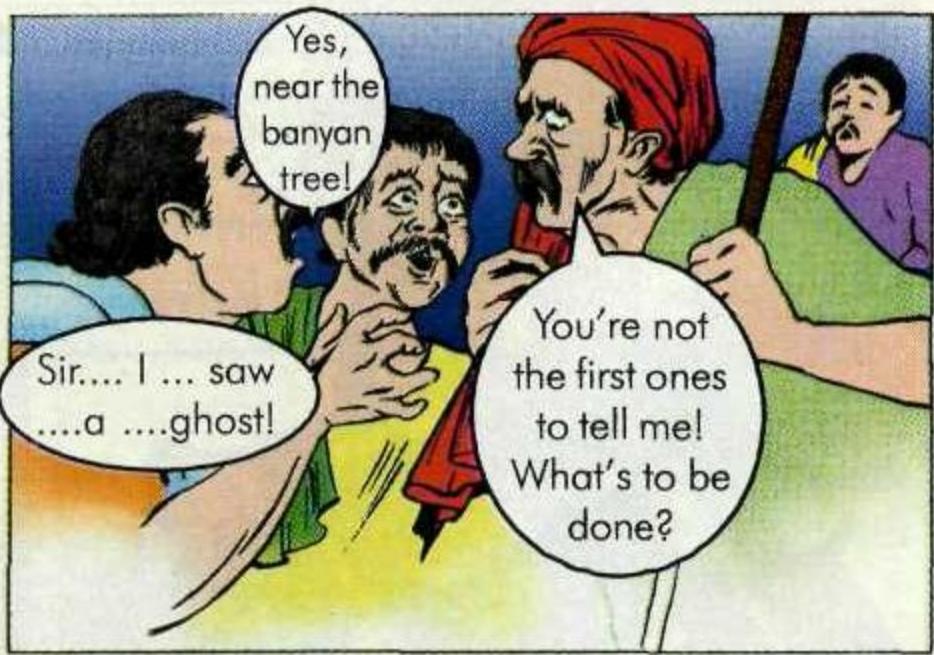
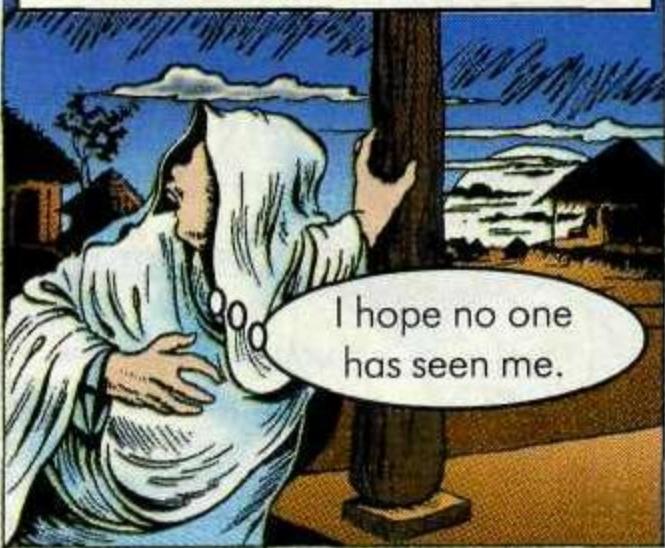


Under cover of darkness, he buries the pots beneath a huge banyan tree on the outskirts of the town.



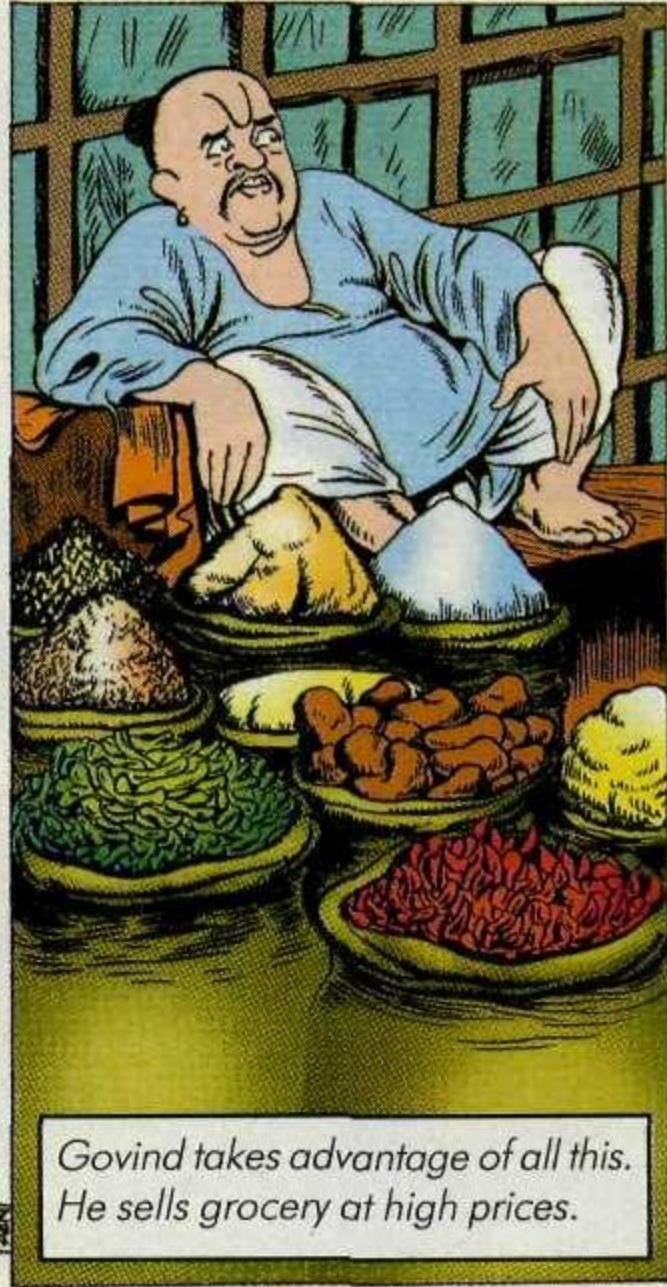
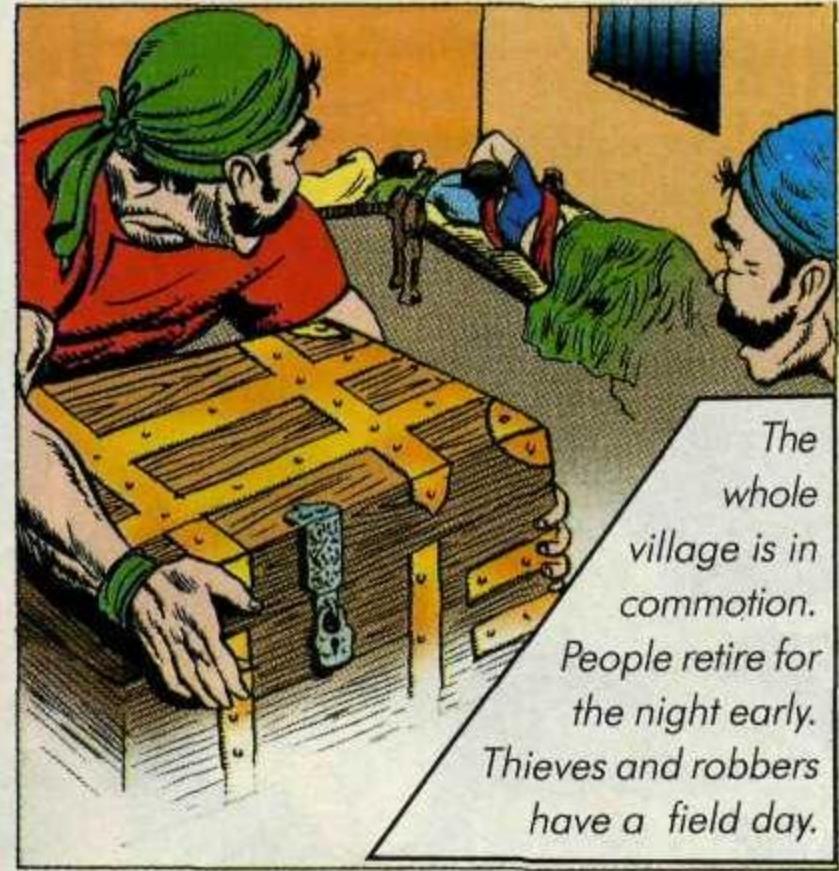
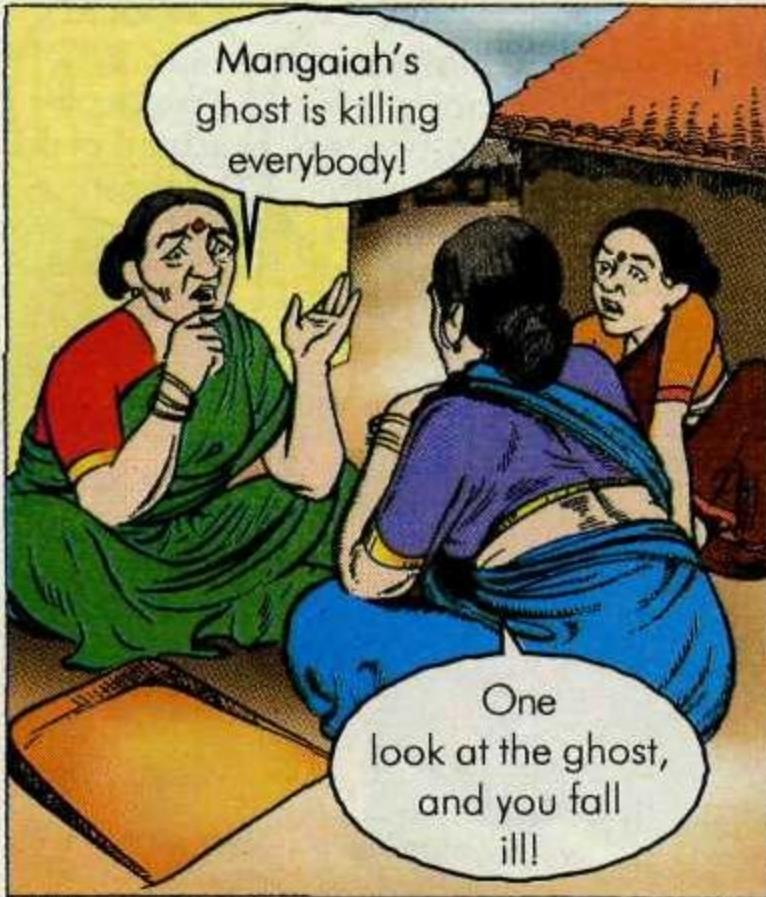
After reaching the tree, Govi changes into a flowing white rot. Whenever someone comes near the tree, he starts shrieking and dancing. The wayfarer then runs for his life.

Before dawn Govind returns home.

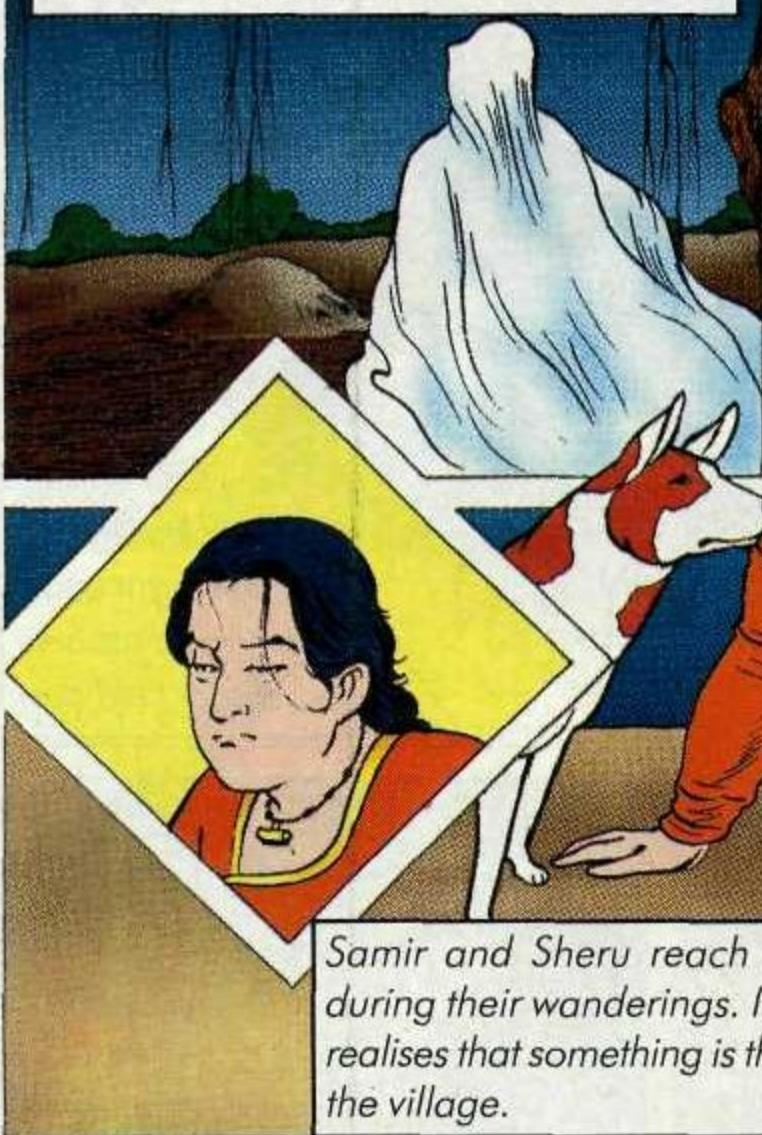


Soon nobody in the village wants to step out in the night.





Govind continues his night vigil over the treasure he has buried.

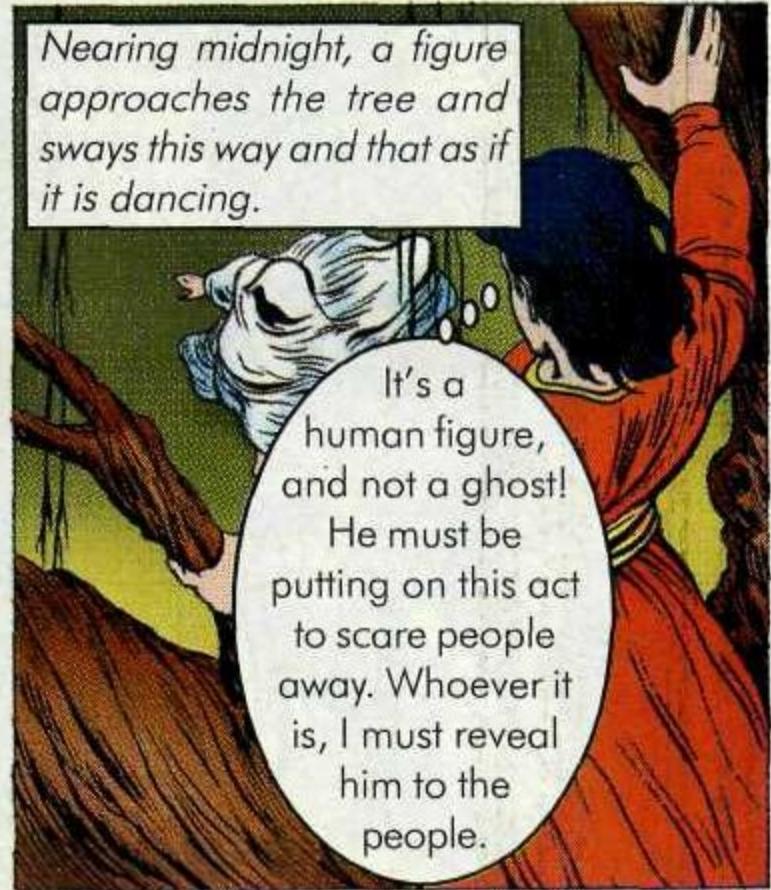


Samir and Sheru reach Mangalpura during their wanderings. In no time, he realises that something is the matter with the village.

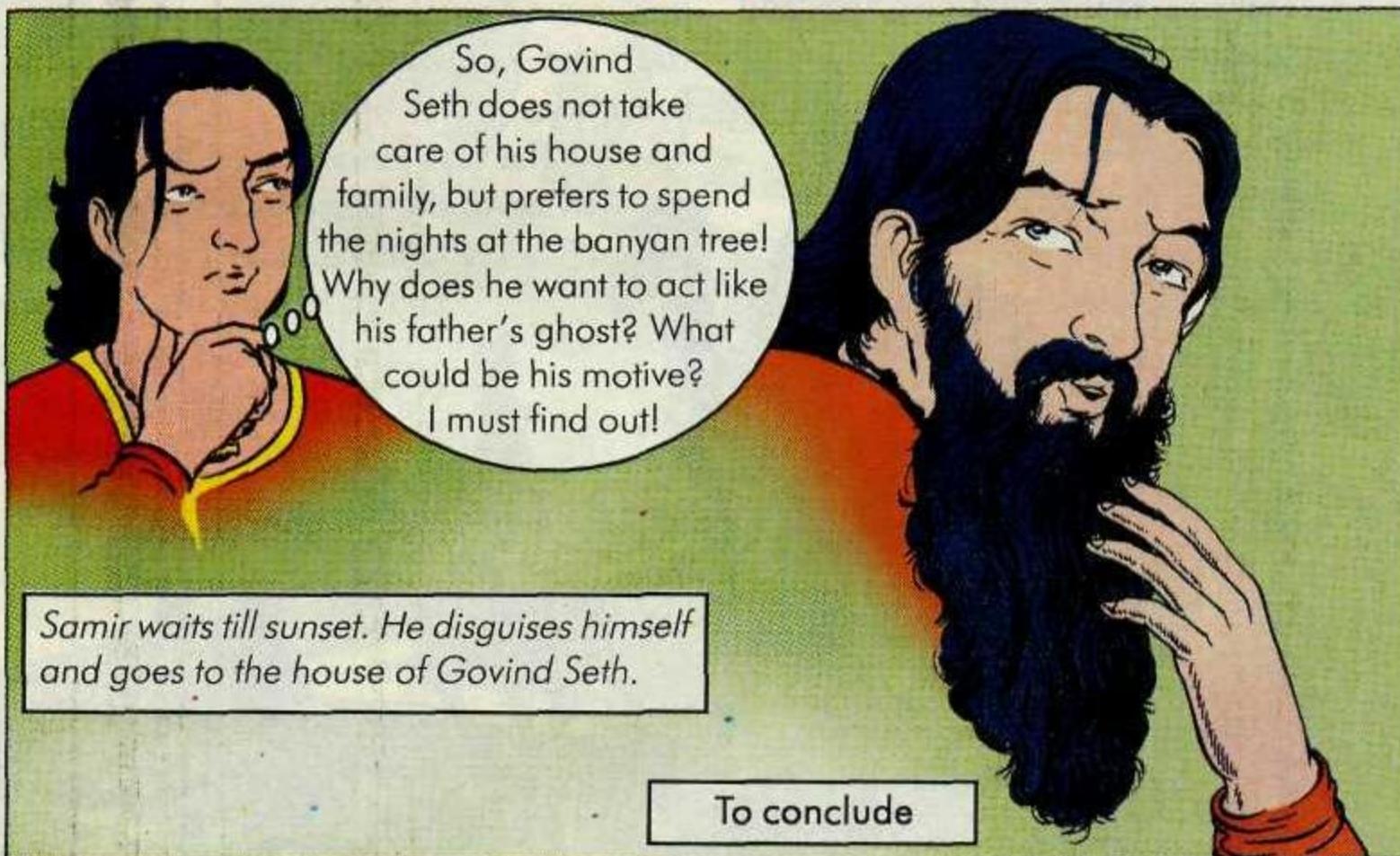
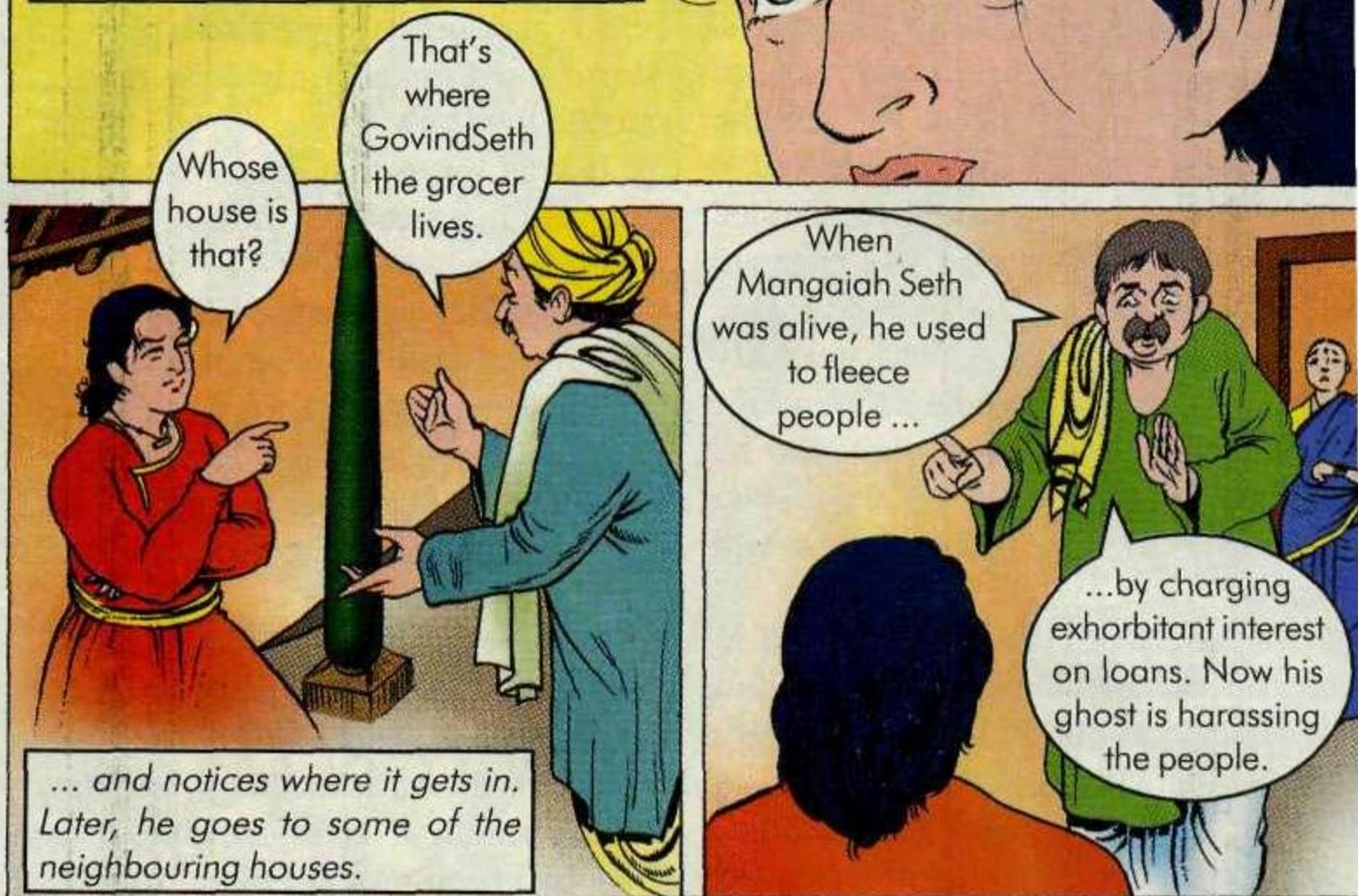
After he listens to the villagers who tell him about the ghost haunting the banyan tree, Samir goes and climbs the tree and waits for the ghost.



Nearing midnight, a figure approaches the tree and sways this way and that as if it is dancing.



At daybreak, Samir follows the figure into the village..



AND JESUS WAS BORN

Christmas is a time for joy, merry-making and, above all, for giving gifts. It is the day when Jesus Christ was born in a manger - and became not just the King of Jews, but of the entire world.

In the town of Nazareth in Galilee lived a virgin, Mary. She was engaged to Joseph, a descendant of David. One day she had a vision in which a heavenly angel appeared to her and announced : "You're the chosen one who is to be blessed with the Son of God, whom you will call Jesus. He will rule the world forever."

The angel of God also appeared in Joseph's dreams and expressed to him the will of God. Hence Joseph took Mary for his wife without any hesitation.

Just then, the ruler of the land, Augustus Caesar, issued an order that all men should go to their native towns and record themselves. So, Joseph went to Bethlehem, in Judea, with Mary, who was close to delivering the divine child.

All the inns in the town were full of

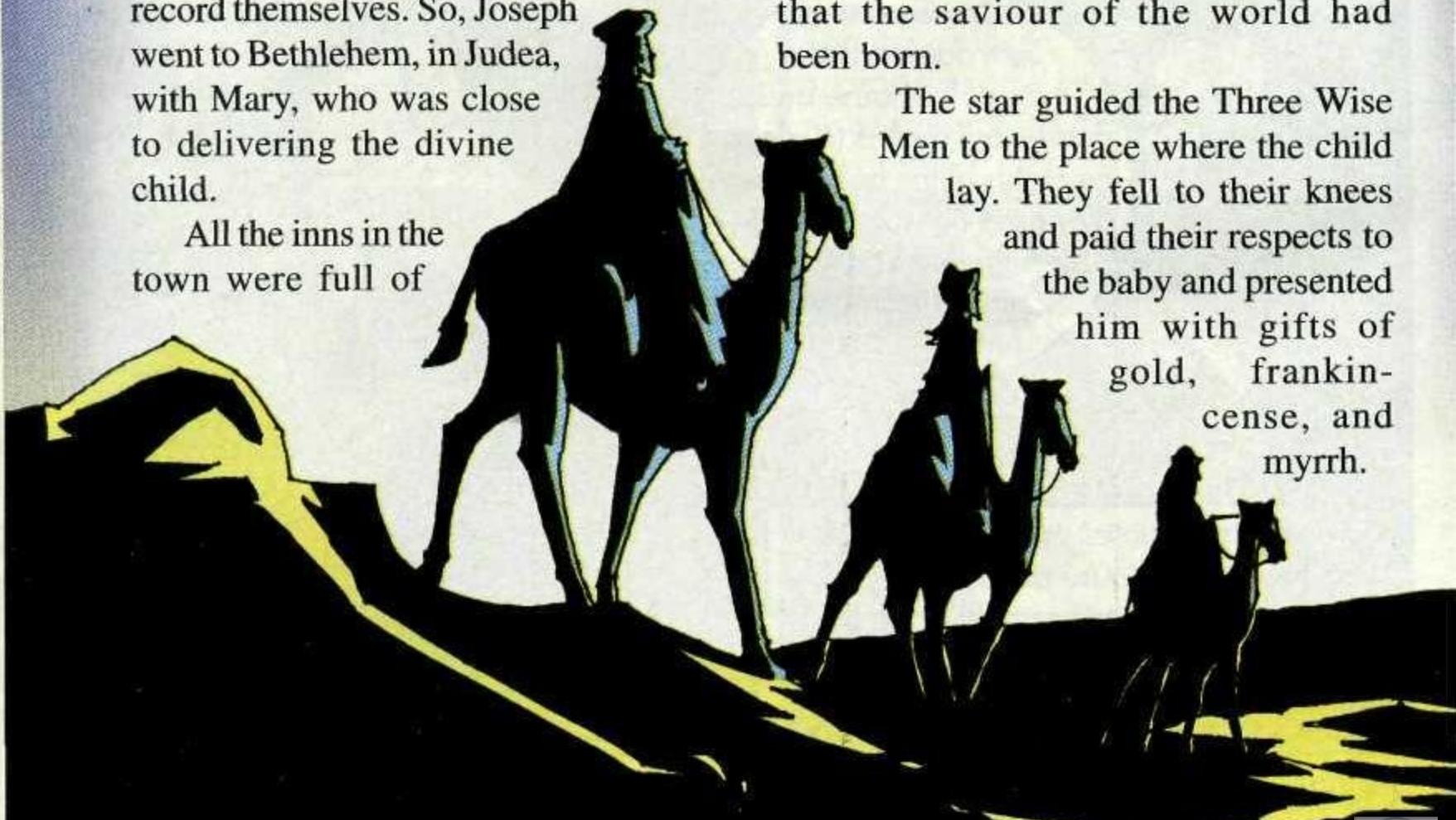
people who had come there for the census and Joseph could find a place for Mary and himself only in a manger outside the town.

It was there that Jesus was born. Wrapped in a swaddle, the infant lay on a bed of straw.

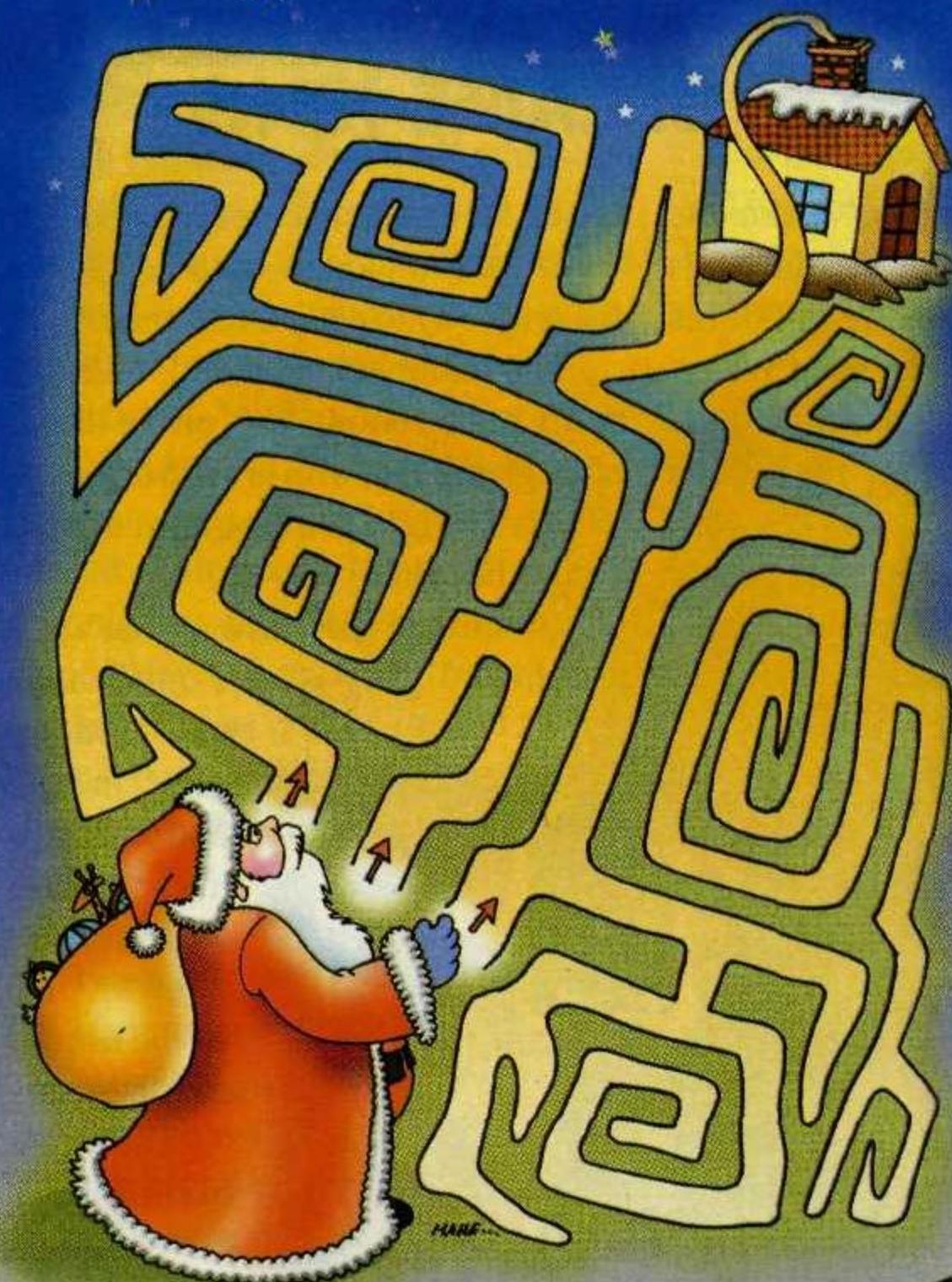
A few shepherds were taking care of their flock in the vicinity. The angel of God appeared before them and said : "Fear not! I bring you good tidings. Your saviour the Messiah is born!" The shepherds rushed to the manger to have a look at the baby.

One day, soon after the birth of Jesus, three wise men from the east arrived at the court of King Herod of Judea. These wise men, known as the Magi, had come there in search of the divine child Jesus. They had been brought there from afar by a moving star following a prediction that the saviour of the world had been born.

The star guided the Three Wise Men to the place where the child lay. They fell to their knees and paid their respects to the baby and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.



SNOWBOUND SANTA



It's Christmas and Santa Claus is busy making his rounds. But he's not sure which road leads to little Laura's house. Will you help him reach it and give away the gifts?



It happened at Christmas time



HOW ARTHUR BECAME KING

It was nearing Christmas. Merlin, the great magician and adviser to the kings of England, stood looking out of his castle window in the depths of Wales. He did not really pay attention to the snow covered landscape, for he was in deep thought. There was disorder and confusion in the land. The people suffered greatly, and the nobles quarrelled amongst themselves trying to grab power so that they could become king. This had been the case ever since the good King Uther had died. Merlin gave a deep sigh. It was time for him to act. He set out to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury, the chief priest of the land, who was in London.

The Archbishop met Merlin with kindness and affection and asked him what he could do for him. Merlin said : "Things can't go on like this. It's time to put the rightful king on the throne. Do

ask all the nobles to come to London to witness this important occasion. That is the only way to end this disorder."

The Archbishop agreed. "We certainly need a strong king on the throne of England. But who is to be the king? Who is the rightful monarch of this fair land?" he asked.

"A miracle will show us that when all the knights of the land have gathered together in London at Christmas time," was Merlin's answer. He would not say anything more.

The Archbishop had faith in Merlin and his wisdom, so he announced that all the

nobles of the land should gather in London at Christmas time, for the new king would be chosen and crowned. All the nobles, out of curiosity or hope, made their way to London. They had to travel in the bad winter weather and make their way through snowdrifts. But any-



one who was entitled to carry a sword rode or walked on the snow-covered roads leading to London.

On Christmas Day, the Archbishop gave the mass at St. Paul's, the grandest cathedral in all England. When the nobles came out of the mass, an amazing sight met their eyes. In the churchyard stood a great square of marble and on the marble was a shiny steel anvil. Thrust into the anvil up to its hilt was a sword with a blade that shone like silver. On the marble square a message was written in gold : *Whosoever pulleth this sword out from the anvil and the stone is the true-born king of all England.*

There was great jostling and pushing when the knights had read the message. Each one thought he was fit and strong enough to pull out the sword and to be the king of England. One after the other, they tried to pull out the sword but not one succeeded. Then the Archbishop announced, on Merlin's advice, that there would be a great tournament on New Year's day, for the right man had still to appear to claim the throne.

So, once more on New Year's day the snow covered roads leading to London were filled with lords, nobles, and knights who had come to take part in

the joustings at the tournament and also try their luck at pulling out that sword.

They came from all over the land, and one of them was the old knight Sir Ector and his two sons Sir Kay and Arthur. Sir Kay wanted to fight in the tournament and prove himself as a brave and worthy



knight. And so they had ridden many miles in that harsh winter weather. Arthur was a young boy of fifteen and he came with his brother and father to see the sights and enjoy the tournament. He helped look after his brother's shield and armour and was very happy to have been able to come to London.





They reached London on New Year's eve and stayed at an inn near the tournament grounds. Arthur was taking in the scene with eager eyes and watching the knights and ladies taking their places in a long gallery at the grounds. The brightly coloured scene excited Arthur and he wondered when he would be able to take part in such a tournament.

Suddenly, Sir Kay exclaimed, "O! My sword! I left it behind at the inn."

Arthur was quick to answer. "Don't worry, brother I shall run and fetch it for you. It's not far," he said and made off as fast as his strong limbs would carry him. When he reached the inn, he found that the host and the workers

had gone off to see the tournament themselves. The place was securely locked up and he could not get into their rooms. Arthur was determined that his brother would not be without a sword on this important day. He remembered seeing a sword in the churchyard, so he went there, pulled the sword out of the anvil without any difficulty, and ran with it to Sir Kay.

Sir Kay looked at him in amazement as he recognised the sword. Arthur quickly explained : "There was no one at the inn, brother, and it was locked up, so I pulled this out of the anvil at the churchyard..."

Sir Kay paid no attention. He took the sword quickly from Arthur and holding it forth rode up to Sir Ector. "Father, I am the King of England. For, I've the sword from the anvil," he cried.

"And did you take it out yourself without any help?" his father asked sceptically.

"No, but I wanted a sword and sent Arthur to get one. He brought me this. A young boy like him can hardly be the king of all England!" replied Sir Kay.

"Well, let me see you do it again," said Sir Ector, and led his son to the marble slab in the churchyard.

But Sir Kay was unable to place



the sword back into the anvil. It kept slithering off. Then Sir Ector asked Arthur to put the sword back and withdraw it once again. Arthur easily plunged it into the anvil and pulled it out again. He did it many times before Sir Ector was convinced. Then both Sir Ector and Sir Kay knelt before Arthur and kissed his hands.

"Why do you do this, father?" cried the young Arthur.

"You are our true and rightful king!" said Sir Ector. "You're not Kay's brother nor my son. You were brought to me by Merlin the Wizard, who bade me look after you well, for you were King Uther Pendragon's son. There

was disorder in the land, and you were young. Merlin did this fearing for your life. Now it is time to disclose the secret."

And Sir Ector took the astonished Arthur to the Archbishop and told him what the lad had done.

Arthur had to pull the sword out three more times before all the knights would believe the Archbishop and accept him as their king. But they finally did so and Arthur was first made a knight and then crowned king.

He became a most heroic king and people still tell tales of his deeds, the splendour of his court, and the bravery of his Knights of the Round Table.



Harsh Reality of Life

By Sithara Sethumadhavan (14), Abu Dhabi

The holidays were coming to an end. We had to travel back to Abu Dhabi in another week, and there was a lot of shopping left. I also had a lot of back-to-school shopping to do. I was excited when I entered the big shopping mall. I saw a beautiful pink pencil case, but when I asked my mom, she firmly said "No". I went behind her, but she would not change her mind. She said the pencil case I had with me had not worn out, so a new pencil case was a mere waste

of money.

I left the shopping mall with a big face. My mom asked me at least to put on an artificial smile. But when she saw my stubborn face, she said : "You might be the only girl who is never satisfied with anything." We got into the car. I kept thinking about that beautiful pencil-case. How I wished I had possessed it! Suddenly, the car stopped. My mom handed a list to my dad and he went to the nearby grocer.



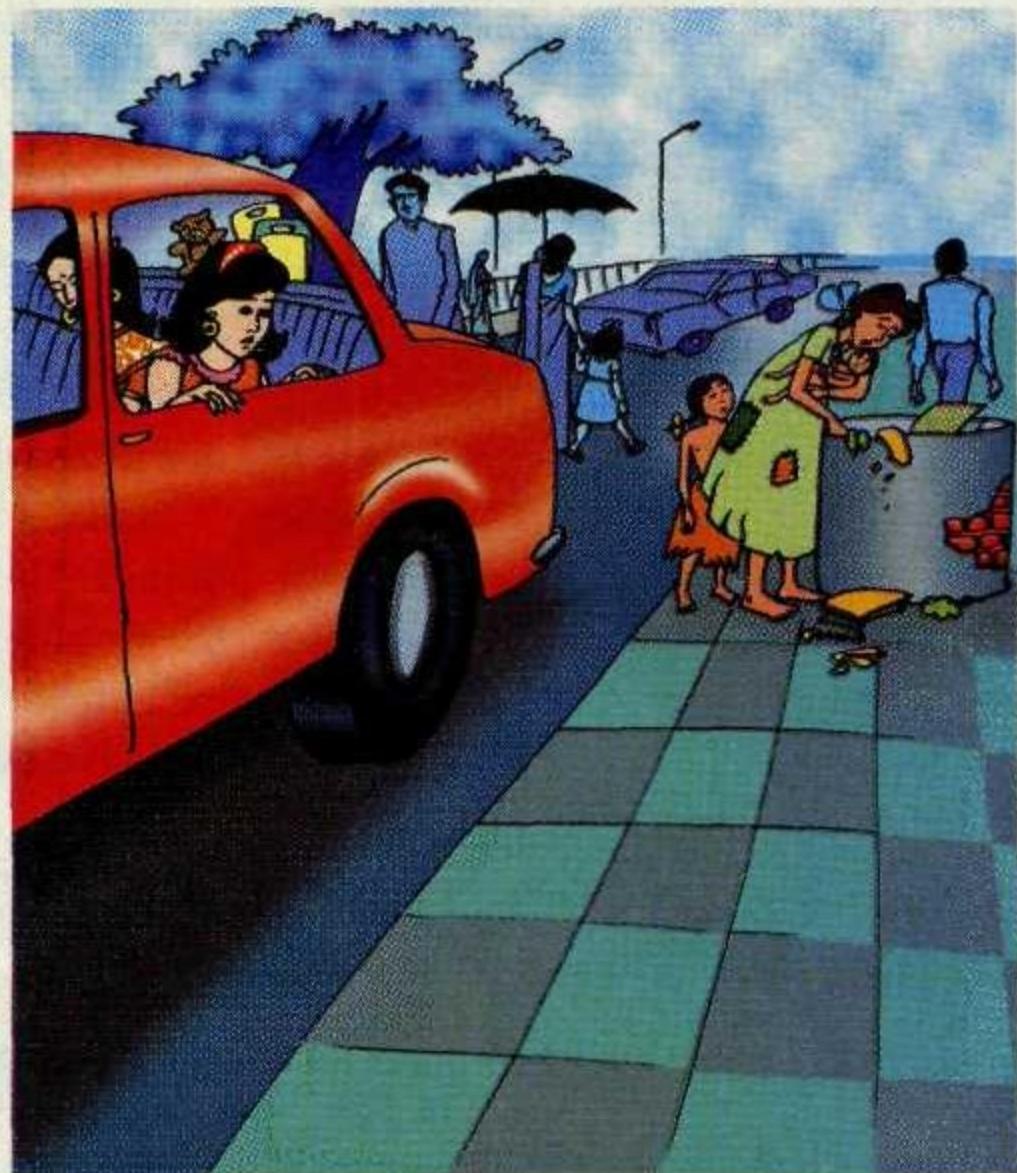
McDonalds. That is what I saw when I looked out. There was a huge rush in there. I noticed a lady coming out from there. She had very long, thick hair. I tried to figure out which shampoo she might be using. She disappeared into that thick crowd, with her



beautiful hair. I looked around, but what I saw filled my eyes. What did I see? Is this what people call "the harsh reality of life"? I wondered. When I recollect what I saw, I even today feel a weight in my heart.

A girl around eight years, dressed in tatters, had a baby in her hand ; it might be around 10 months. And a small girl around five years was following her. She reached her hand into the garbage bin. She caught hold of a small carton and took out a piece of potato chip. She broke it into small bits, and fed her siblings and herself. I suddenly felt my heart beating heavily and my cheeks turning red. She kept on searching the bin, high and low. By that time, my dad had returned, and we left. On the way back home, I kept thinking about her. How dull and lustreless her eyes were! I saw an ocean of sorrow in her eyes.

In the evening, I apologized to my mom for my behaviour. I then sat down with a magazine and started leafing through the pages. I knew my mind was somewhere else. That little girl's actions kept flashing in my mind. What could



have forced her to eat the leftovers of someone else? I just compared myself with her. How lucky am I? What is it that I do not have? But I still grumbled for silly things. That poor thing struggling to live her life. And me, who has no worries or troubles, I am creating one! How I wish, when they returned home, their mom served them *rotis* and milk! And their dad got them decent clothes to wear? I said a small prayer for her and her family and all those who suffer like her. From that day, I never grumbled and always remained happy. And that's why my mom proudly says that I am the best daughter on earth.



ADVENTURE IN THE HILLS

- By Debjyoti Chanda (11), Shillong

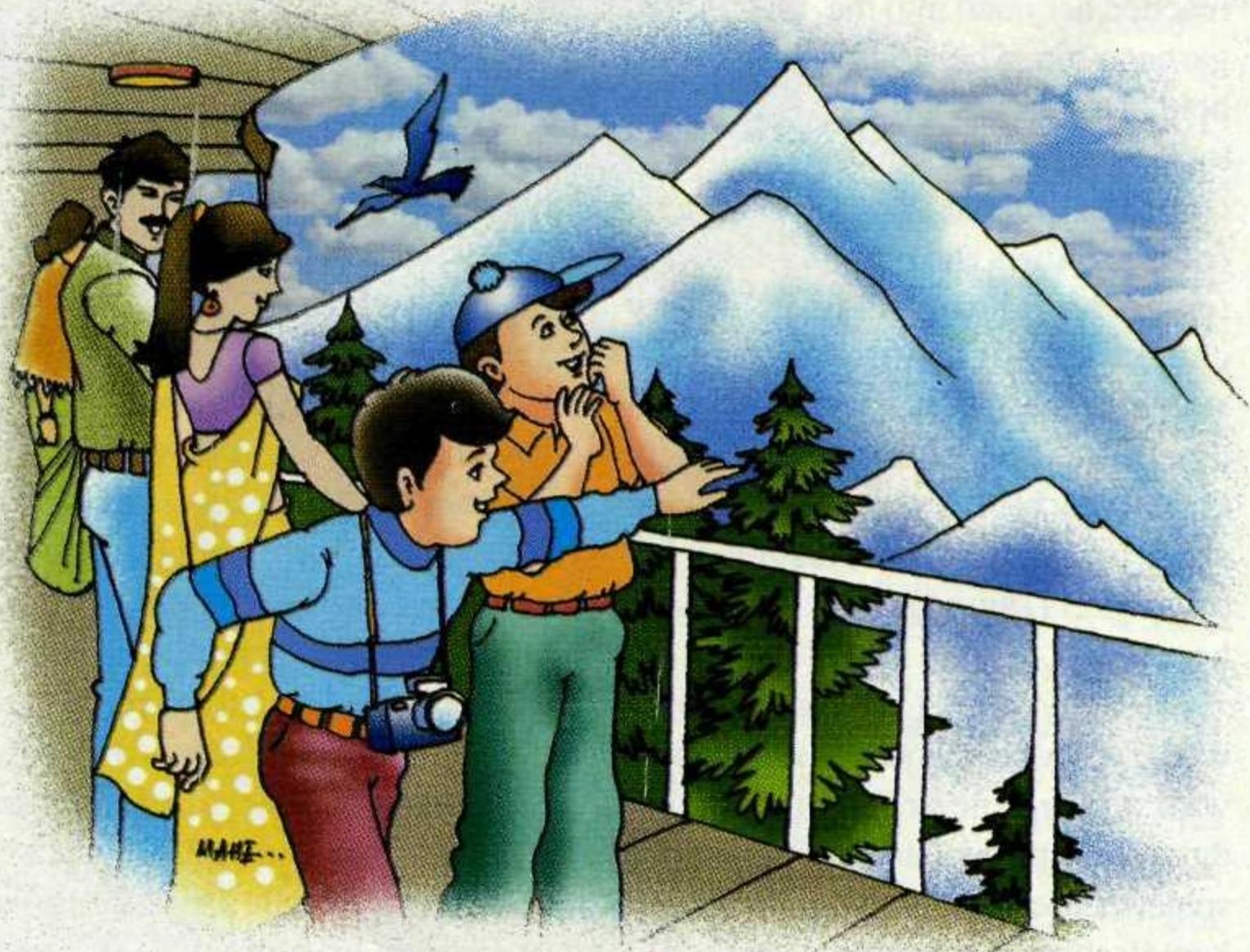
Once upon a time, there lived in a town two very good friends - David and James. They always helped each other and shared everything between themselves. They shared their lunch, they played together, they helped each other with their homework, and also spent their holidays together. Their friendship became famous in the school.

They were quite adventurous and loved to visit new places where they would have never gone before. Such

plans sometimes invited danger for them. Last winter vacation they persuaded their parents to go to Shimla. This was one place which they had never visited.

So after a few days they all went to Shimla. They reached the place early in the morning. Seeing the beauty, David exclaimed: "Oh! What a lovely place! We have never seen such a beautiful place."

The friends had a great time playing there and their parents were also



enjoying the lovely sight of hills which could be seen from their hotel rooms.

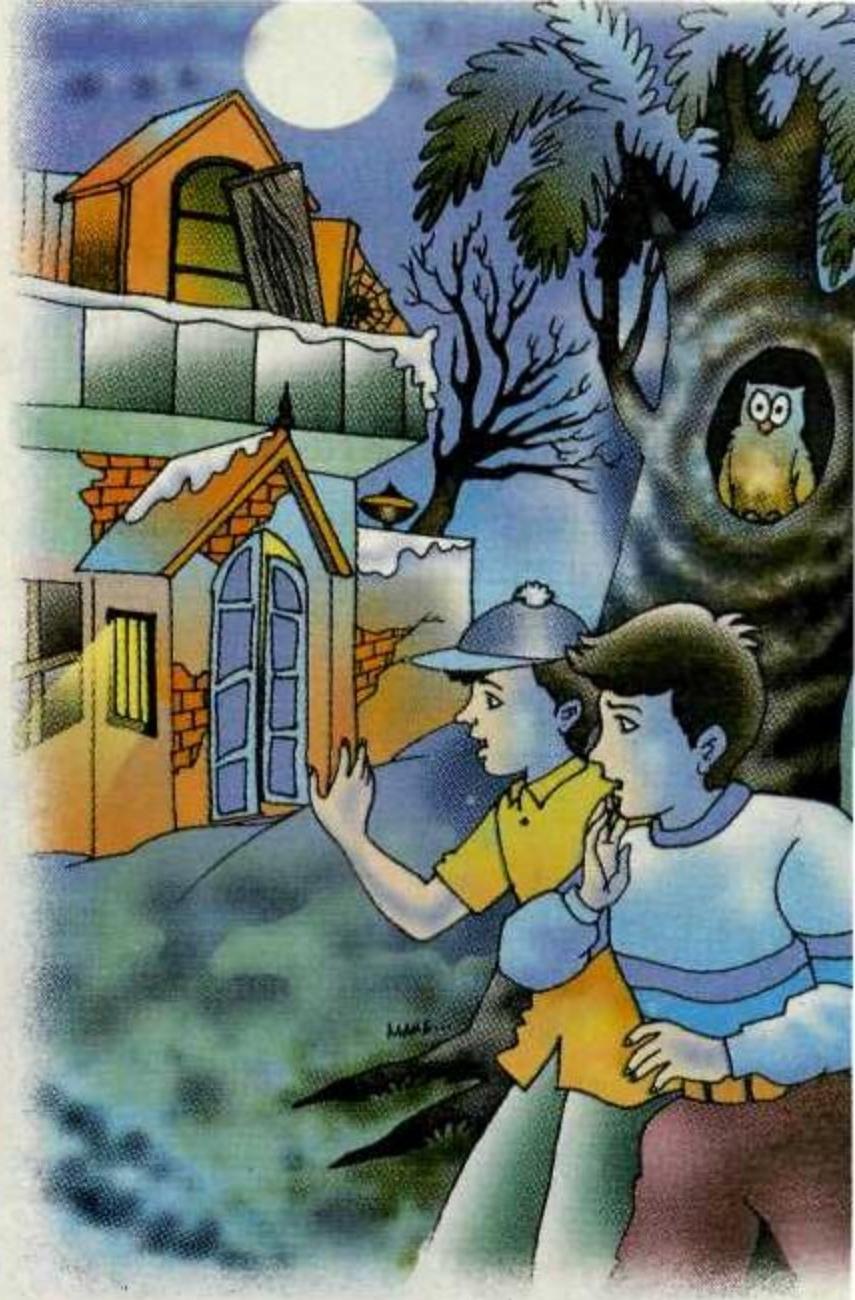
After a few days, the boys wanted some adventure. They wanted to go around the hills. As David and James were going out, the hotel manager stopped them and asked: "Where are you two going?"

They replied: "We're just going out to enjoy the scenery."

The manager warned them not to go to the village named "Sohanpur". The boys did not understand why and so they decided to find out for themselves.

After walking for half-an-hour, they reached a village and on inquiry were told they were in Sohanpur. They reached a very old house which was on the verge of collapse. Being adventurous they wanted to go inside but were stopped by a voice saying : "There are ghosts in the house. For the past few months there have been some noises. When one of our brave men named Dheeru entered the house to find out what the matter was, he was trapped and has not come out ever since."

After hearing the story they went back to the hotel. The manager had thought they would never come back, but he was wrong. They had been making plans on their way to the hotel. At about 9 o' clock they both went to bed. But after everybody had slept, they woke up and proceeded to the village and slowly and quietly they



entered the old house. When they entered, they were trapped, too. After a while two ugly looking but hefty men came and caught hold of them. They asked : "Who are you? Why have you come here?"

The two boys gave their names and said they had heard that there were ghosts in the house. The two men started laughing loudly and, catching them by their collars, took them to a dark room and put them inside and locked them up. In the room they found another person looking very thin and weak.

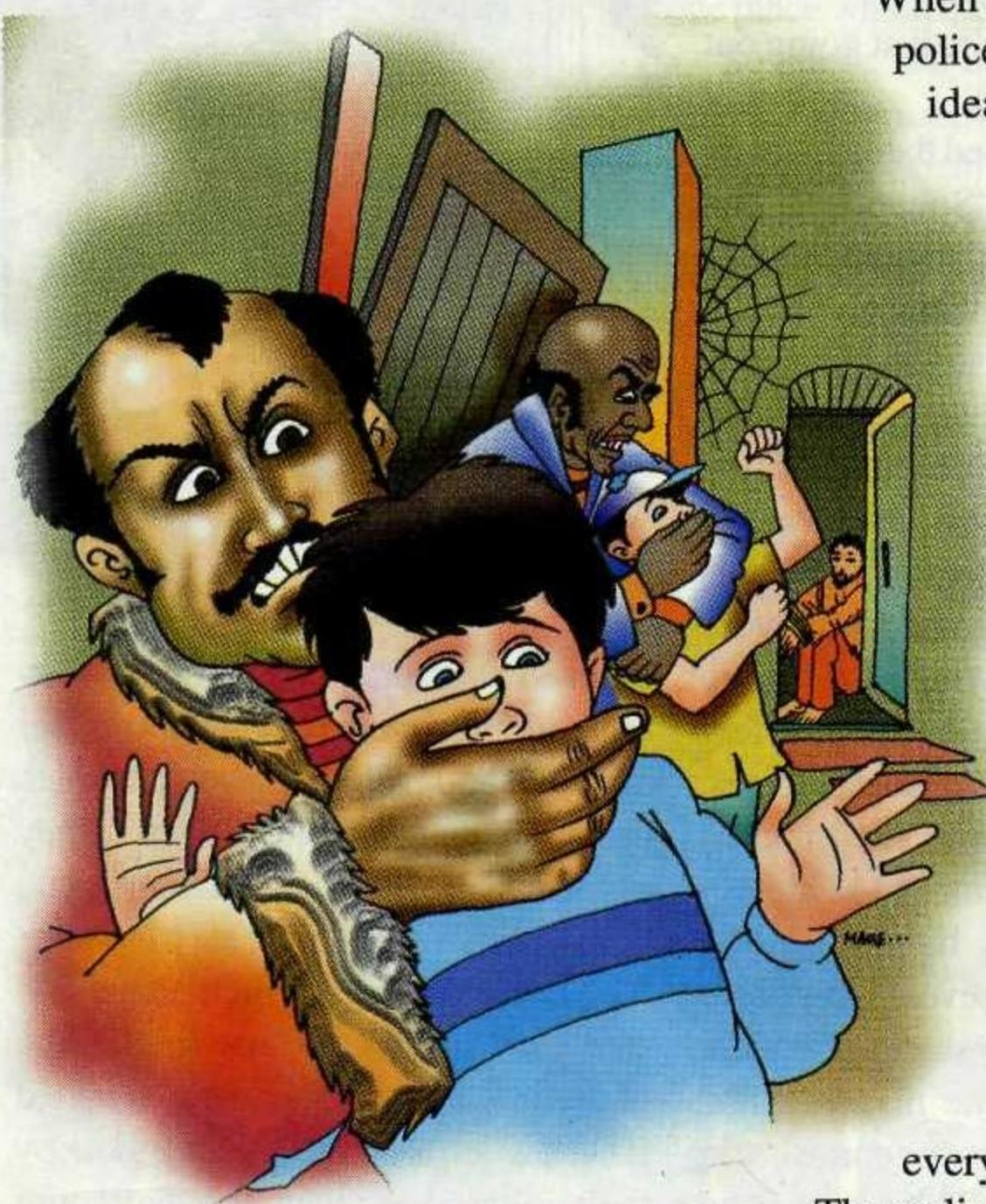
James asked : "Who are you? Why have you been put in this room?"



The man said : "I am Dheeru. I was caught the same way you have been caught. However, I know some of their plans."

David asked : "Tell us, please, what are their plans?"

Dheeru replied : "They have made a



plan to rob all the houses in the village as well as the temple."

David said : "That is very bad!"

The next day in the hotel, everybody woke up and the boys' parents

became tense. They were missing!

The parents asked everybody in the hotel, but none could say anything. Ultimately they called the police. The manager told them that he had warned the boys not to go to Sohanpur.

The police immediately went there.

When the boys heard the police siren, they had an idea.

David and James both asked Dheeru to shout. So all the three started shouting and at the same time David started thumping the floor which made a loud noise. The police, on hearing the noise and shouting, entered the house and caught the two crooks and later opened the room in which the boys had been locked up.

They explained everything to the police.

The police thanked the boys, for, if they had not created all that ruckus, the crooks would not have been caught. The parents were happy to see their children safe. The boys apologised for sneaking out at night.



Chandu's Clever Act

By Priyam Ahuja, Kota, Rajasthan

Once upon a time, the animals in the forest organised elections. Many of them, like the lion, the fox, the cheetah, and the monkey, contested in the election.

When the other animals in the jungle came to know that Chandu the monkey was also a contestant, they began teasing him. Had the monkey become mad? they whispered amongst themselves. But Chandu had confidence in his abilities and knew that whatever he did would be correct.

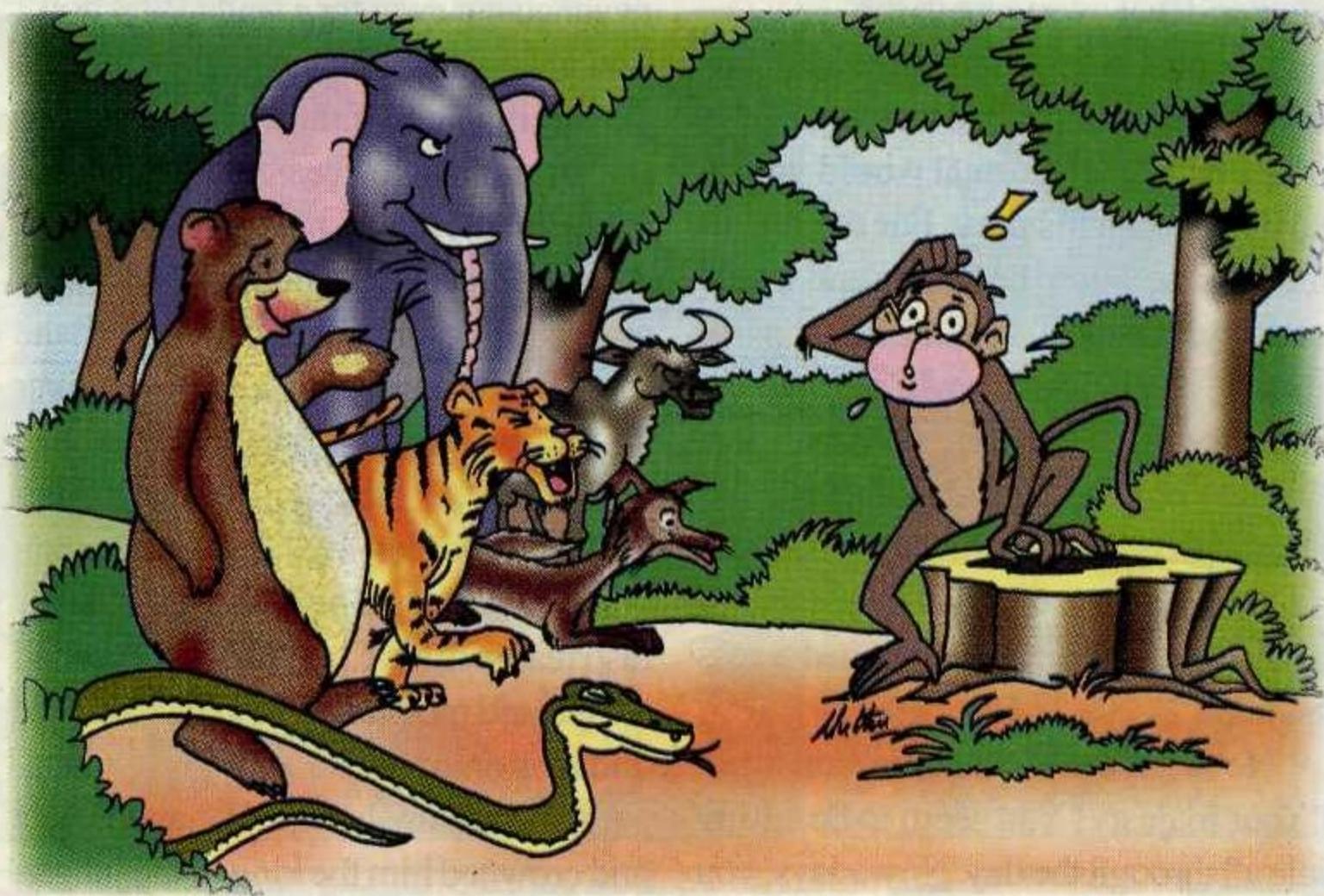
Chandu was a very naughty, and

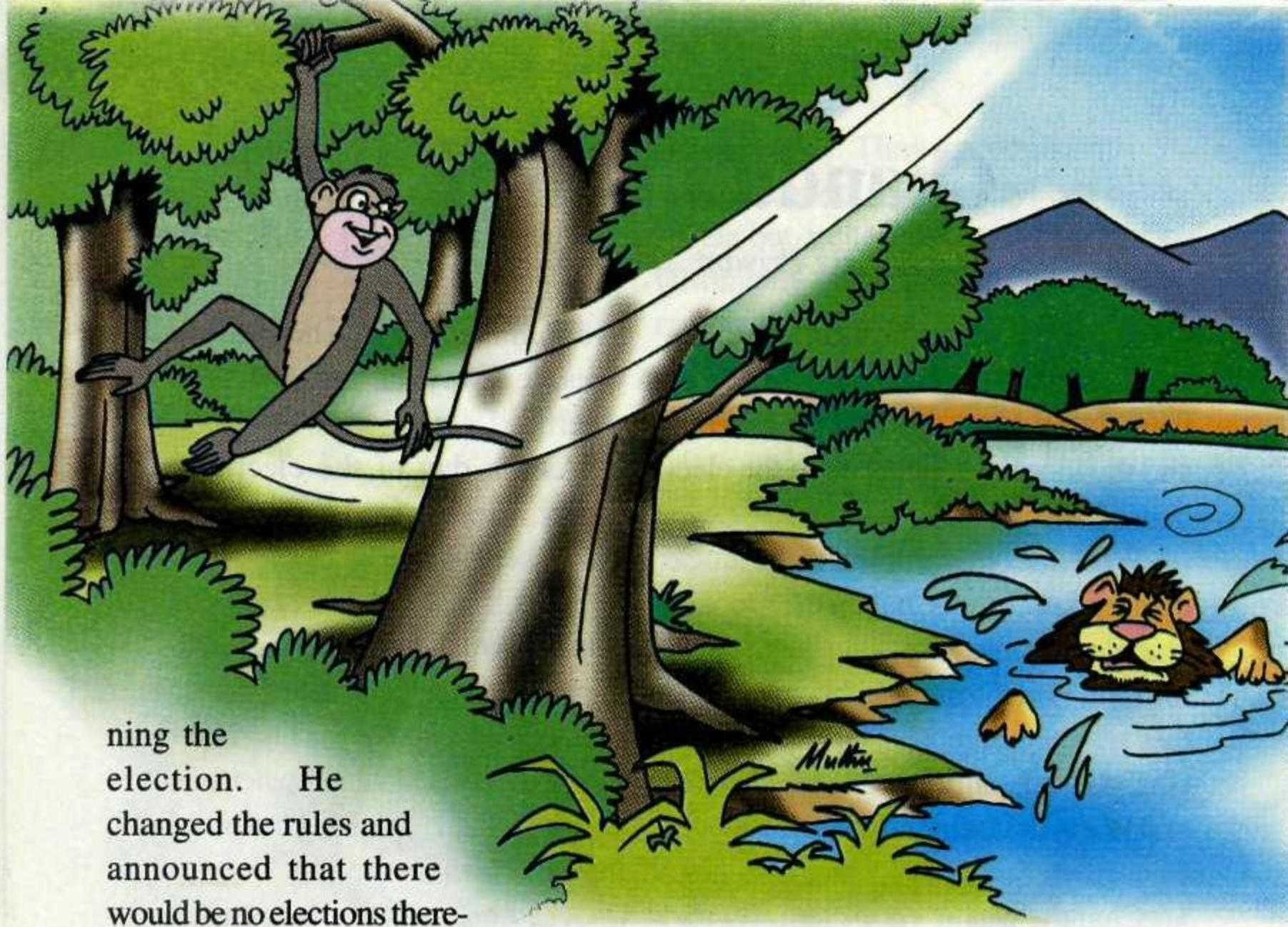
lively animal. Though he was mischievous, he always helped others and was cheerful.

As the day of the election grew nearer, Chandu met the animals and asked them to vote for him. "Please vote for me. I'll take good care of you all. I'll also do many good things for you."

But the animals in the jungle had other ideas. They wanted the lion to win, so that he would help them when enemies attacked them. Thinking on these lines, they all voted for the lion.

The lion was very happy after win-





ning the election. He changed the rules and announced that there would be no elections thereafter and that everyone in the jungle must accept him as the king forever. He also announced that for 28 days in a month, each animal would voluntarily become his prey. For the rest of the days, he would be fasting and would eat only rabbits.

One day it was Chandu's turn to become the lion's prey. He was confident that he would do the right thing. He also knew that he had to outwit the lion and save many lives. Chandu pondered for a while and a brilliant idea flashed across his mind.

He went up to the lion and said: "Your majesty! You seem to be sitting idle all through the day. Nowadays, you

never go out even for a walk. Why don't you get up and take a stroll?"

Saying so, Chandu climbed on to the branch of a tree. He then went jumping from one branch to another. And the lion kept running about here and there, trying to keep pace with the monkey. Suddenly, he fell into the river and drowned.

When the other animals came to know of this, they realised that the lion was a haughty and beastly animal. They also realised that Chandu, who they had teased and mocked, was in fact a clever and kind animal.

All the animals hailed Chandu's feat and crowned him the king of the jungle.



THE AMUL CHEESE BOY



IN PICNIC PANIC

One bright sunny day...



...a picnic is in progress.



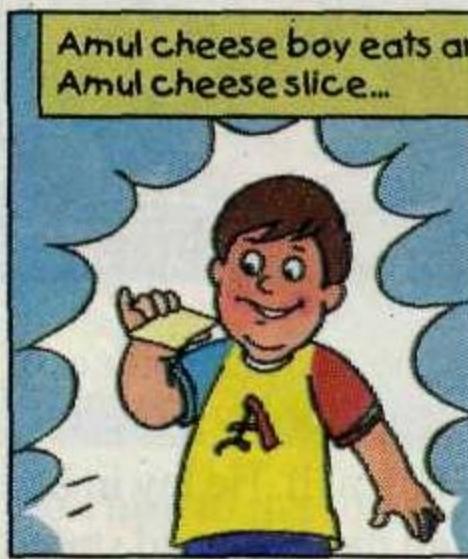
Little Munnu Verma crawls away.



Suddenly, huge rocks come tumbling down the mountain.



Amul cheese boy eats an Amul cheese slice...



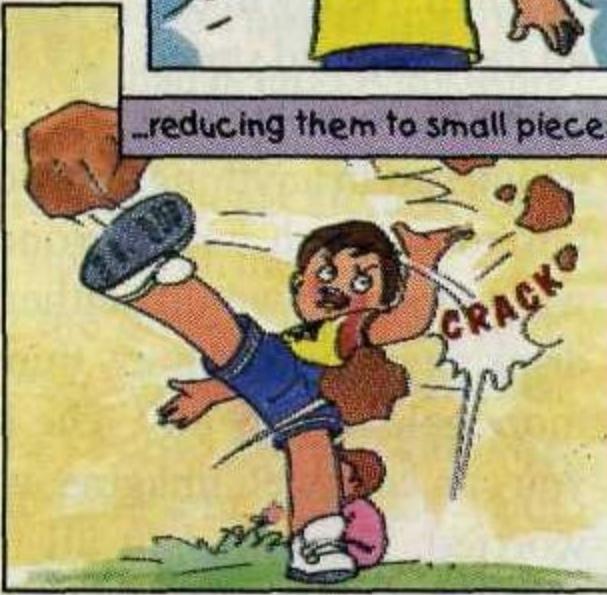
...and becomes strong and powerful.



He smashes the falling rocks...

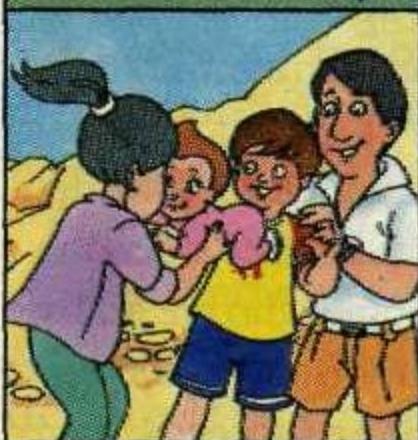


...reducing them to small pieces

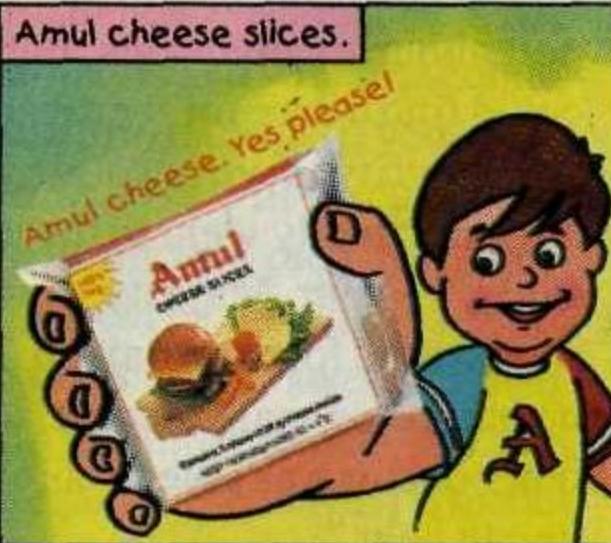


All thanks to the cheese that has more milk in it.

Munnu is rescued and back with his family.



Amul cheese slices.



Marketed by Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Limited,
Anand 388 001. E-mail: cheese@amul.com For FREE home delivery of
our products in select cities visit the Amul Cyberstore at www.amul.com



daCunha/ACS/2/2





The crown prince of Kumbhi Nagar had fallen ill. He lay in bed all day long and stared at the ceiling. He had no interest in anything and would not talk to or laugh with anyone. What was worse; he would neither eat nor drink anything and grew thinner and more pale day by day. The king, as you can very well imagine, was very worried. He called in all the best doctors in the kingdom and from the neighbouring countries, but no one could find a cure for the prince.

The royal *vaidya* and some advisers finally went to the king and said : " Your Majesty, maybe we should send for Shiv Bairagi. It is said he has cured many people whom no other doctor was able to cure. Maybe he can help."

THE BEST MEDICINE

The king was most surprised. "You mean that boastful quack?" he exclaimed. "He doesn't know any medicine! I've received so many complaints about him. He only cures people in his imagination and then boasts about it. How can *he* cure the prince when even the best doctors have given up?"

The king's advisers, however, persisted. "Sire," they said, "he has cured many people when the best doctors had given up hope. Since we have no other solution in mind, let's give him a chance."

After thinking about it for a while, the king finally said, "Let's do one thing. Get a few people who are really ill. We will call Shiv Bairagi and ask him to cure them. If he succeeds, then



we shall ask him to treat the prince. If he fails, he will be beheaded."

The advisers and ministers felt that this was a good idea.

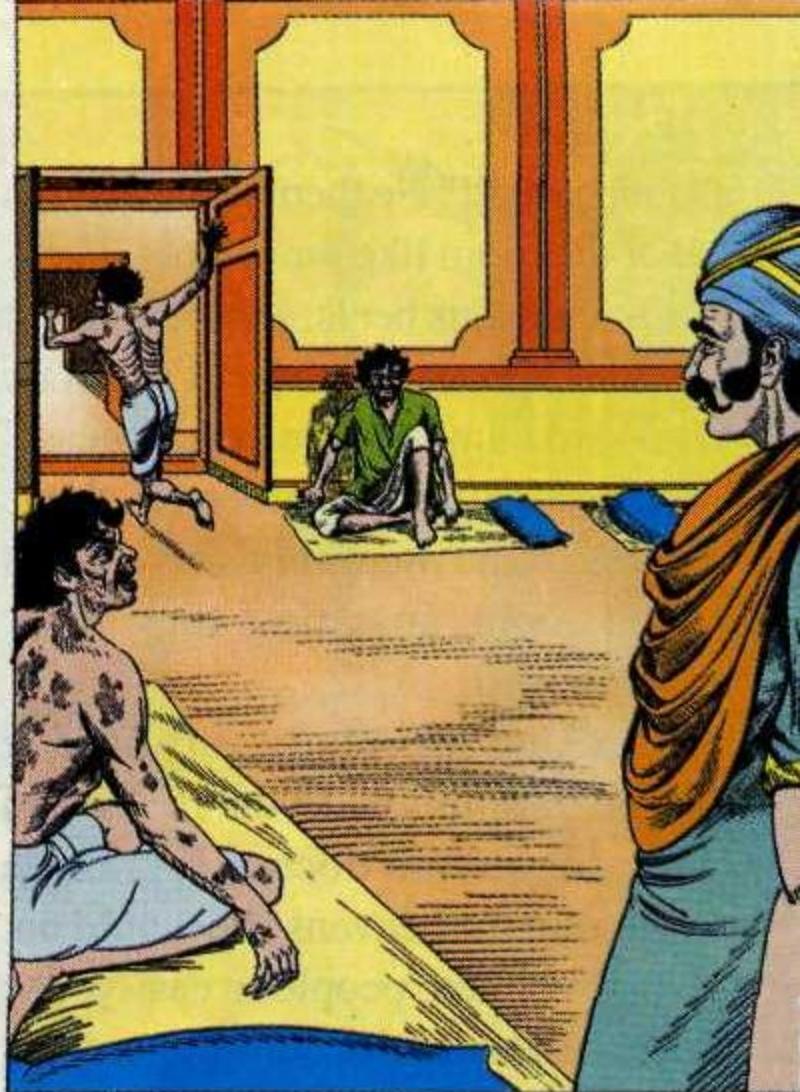
They went around the capital and rounded up a few incurably sick people. They were housed in a room next to the crown prince's chambers. After that Shiv Bairagi was summoned to the king's court.

When he turned up, the king said : "I understand you're not really a doctor but only a quack. If you have been cheating the people by pretending to know all about medicine, you deserve to be punished. What do you have to say?

"Your majesty," said Shiv Bairagi. "I've cured many incurable invalids. My methods and medicines are different from those of the others. Some of them are jealous of my skills and they spread all kinds of rumours about me. It's not right to believe their baseless words and punish me."

"If that's so, you must prove your skill," said the king. "In that room over there are a few people. They have been ill for a long time. You must cure them. If you fail, you'll be beheaded for being a fraud."

Shiv Bairagi was nonplussed. He did not know what to say. In fact, there was nothing he could say in his defence. The king had trapped him neatly.



The guards took him to the room where the sick had been staying. Shiv Bairagi told the guards : "I would like to speak to the patients alone. Please leave me alone with them."

When the guards left the room, Shiv Bairagi addressed the patients. "I've the recipe for a fantastic ointment that can cure all your illnesses. But to make that ointment, I need a human heart. It must be fried and ground and mixed with some other medicines and ingredients. If you apply it three times, you will be cured. To enable making this medicine, one among you must be prepared to die!"

Then Shiv Bairagi looked at a man suffering from tuberculosis. He got worried. He said : "I'm not ill! I'm quite fit and feel very well. I've no illness at



all, none at all!" He then got up and ran out of the room like the wind.

Quick on his heels, another patient followed him exclaiming : "I'm not ill. Who said I am ill? I've no sickness." Soon, one after the other all those believed to be incurably sick ran out of the room, insisting they were perfectly well.

The king was really surprised at this development. Even if Aswini Deva, the divine doctor, had come down from the heavens , he would not have cured these people so easily. The king, with his entire entourage, went into the room to see what was happening. They found Shiv Bairagi sitting all alone, looking very smug. Before the king could say anything, he heard sounds of loud laughter from the crown prince's room next door. The king had not heard his son laugh like that for a long time. He went in and asked : "My son, are you all right?

Why are you laughing like this?"

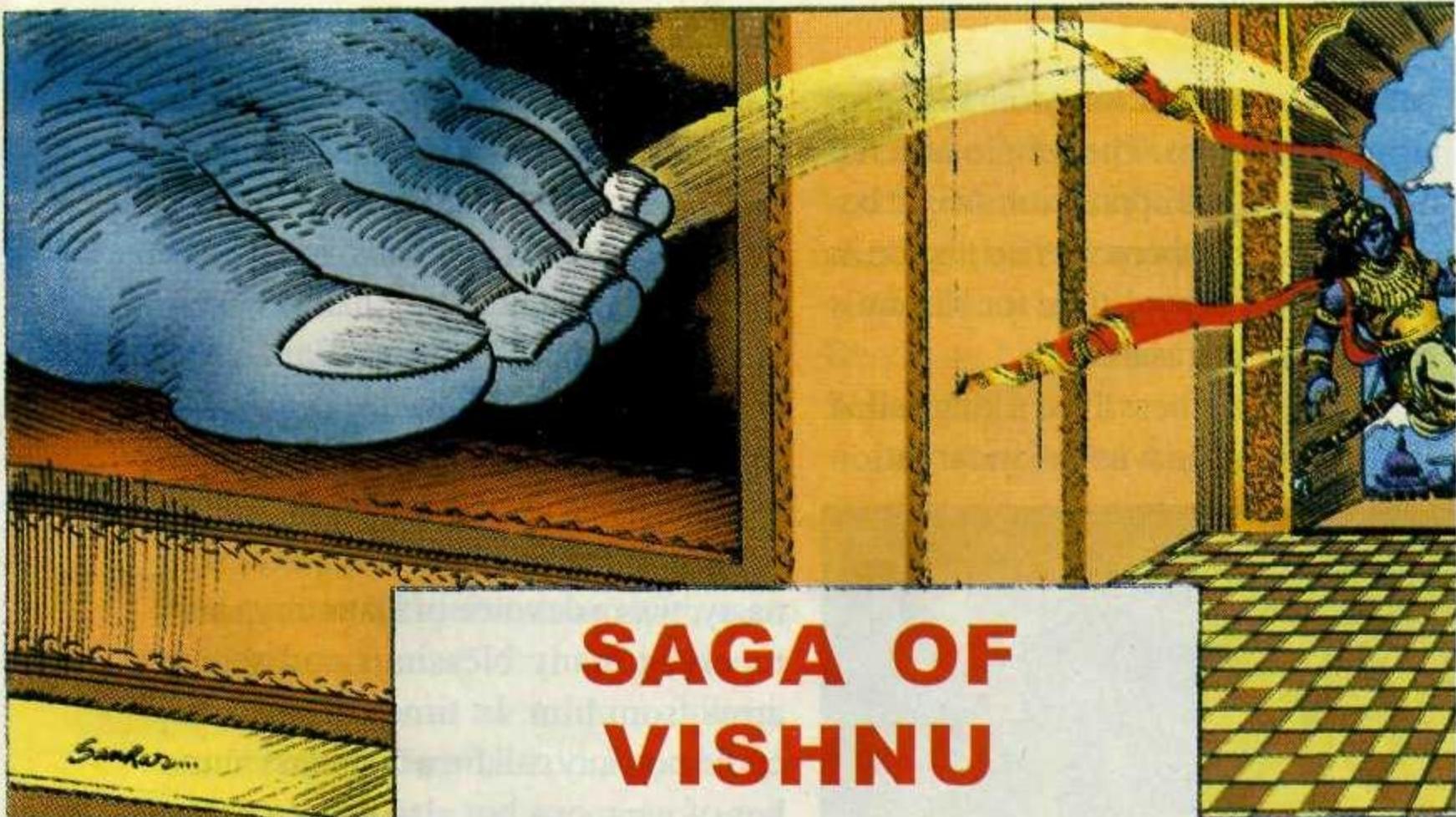
The prince answered : "What illness do I have? I'm not ill at all!" And he went into gales of laughter. Then the prince told the king how Shiv Bairagi had cured all those invalids. Shiv Bairagi was sure that the king would behead him for committing fraud and he waited with his heart in his mouth.

The king turned to Bairagi and said, "Though I am convinced that you don't know any medicine, I shall forgive you. But you have to give up medicine. Instead, you can join my court as the court jester. Your job will be to see that the prince is always kept in good humour and does not suffer depression again."

Shiv Bairagi agreed. In fact, that was what he was good at – making people laugh. That was how he cured them.

That is why it is said, laughter is the best medicine.





SAGA OF VISHNU

7. BIRTH OF TRIMURTI AS A SAGE'S SON

After Emperor Bali was banished to the nether world, the Devas and Indra came back to Heaven. True to his promise, Vishnu as Dandapani stayed back to guard Mahabali's palace. Ravana thought this was a good chance to conquer the nether world. He felt he could easily overcome the dwarf Vamana. When Ravana tried to enter the nether world, Vishnu assumed his Viswarupa – a form that covered the whole Universe – and threw him out with a flick of his toe. Ravana flew out of the nether world and fell down unconscious in Lanka. He did not make another attempt to conquer the nether world ever again.

Emperor Bali was allowed to visit

Chandamama

his kingdom once a year. He would come to bless the crops and protect them from pests and insects. In certain parts of his kingdom on earth, his annual visit is celebrated as Diwali. Lamps are lit and crackers let off in joy.

The island of Bali in Indonesia is said to have surfaced because Bali re-entered the earth from the nether world at that point.

The Pallavas who trace their descent from Mahabali created a beautiful complex of shore temples and called the place Mahabalipuram. Mahabali, as he predicted, has indeed won fame for his honourable conduct and life, though he was vanquished by Vishnu.

After Bali, his descendants did not



govern well and the kingdom broke up into small regions. The people suffered from misrule and oppression. Might became right and there was no justice in the land. It was soon time for Vishnu's sixth avatar, Parasuram.

At that time there lived a king called Karth Arjun. He was the incarnation



of the Sudarshan Chakra. It so happened that once, while Lord Vishnu was in deep sleep, his Sudarshan Chakra and the Panchajanya Conch had an argument. The spirit of the Chakra taunted the spirit of the Conch saying, "With my thousand sharp rays, I'm the one responsible for slaying thousands of enemies of mankind.

What do you do except make a loud noise?"

The Conch was very upset. "Such arrogance cannot go unanswered," he retorted and cursed the Chakra. "You will take birth as a king on Earth, and Our Lord himself, in the form of a sage's son, will destroy you with an axe."

Karth Arjun, of the Hayahaya dynasty, was a devotee of Dattatreya and received many blessings and secret arms from him. In times of need, he could not only call for a countless number of weapons but also grew a thousand arms with which to use them.

The story of Dattatreya is very interesting. Once the famous sage Atreya desired to have a son. So he prayed to Lord Vishnu. Vishnu, along with Siva and Brahma, appeared before him. "Maharishi Atreya, the three of us are one and in this united form we will be born as your son." Then the three forms disappeared.

At that time Narada called on the three wives of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma – Lakshmi, Parvati, and Saraswati. He went on extolling the virtues of Rishi Atreya's wife to them. He said the strength of Anasuya's devotion to her husband had enabled her to work all kinds of miracles. She was able to drive away the demons who harassed the river Ganga. Once she saved the life of her husband Atreya. He was



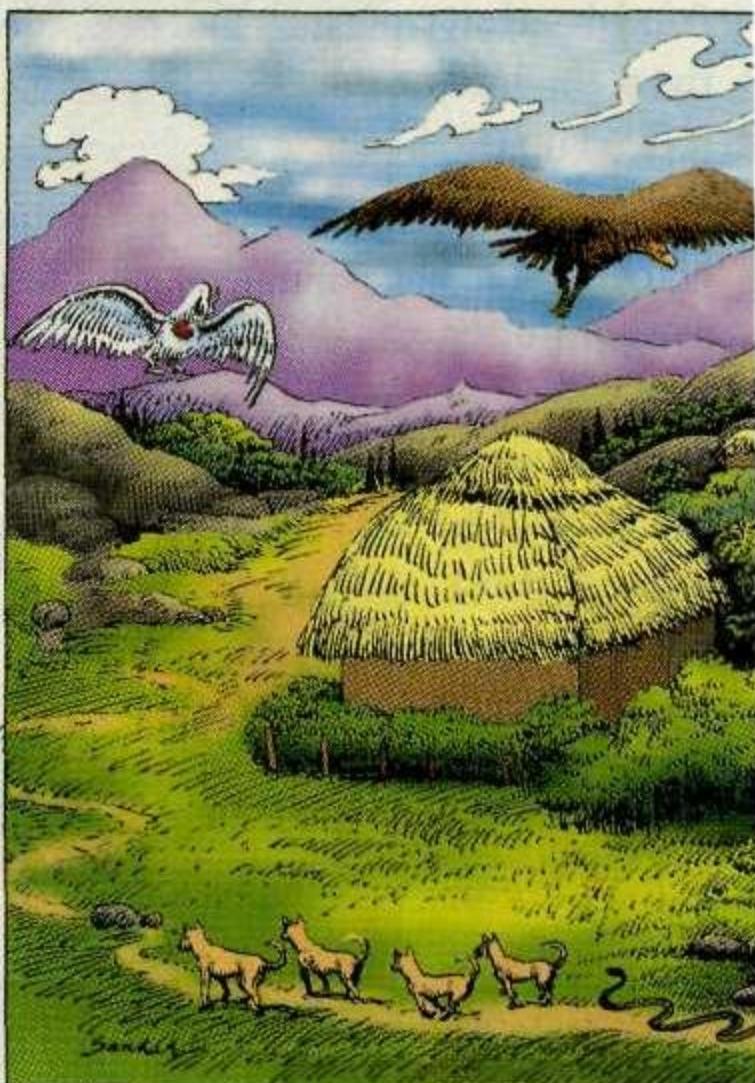
fated to die at sunset. She was able to persuade the charioteer of the Sun to delay the sunset and thus crossed over the time of death, and her husband stayed alive.

Listening to all this praise from Narada, envy and jealousy took over the hearts of the three Devis. They decided to destroy the purity of Anasuya's devotion to her husband and sent their husbands to Atreya's ashram with specific instructions. The three gods appeared as sages at the ashram calling out for alms. They had chosen a time when Rishi Atreya was away and Anasuya was in charge of the ashram. Anasuya welcomed the three gods hospitably and invited them to eat food. The three of them said they could accept her invitation only on one condition, that she served them naked.

Anasuya realised that she was being tested. She sprinkled the water she had in her hand on the three sages and at once they turned into little babies. When she saw the babies, motherly love burst forth and she fed them with great care and love. Anasuya then sang the three babies to sleep. As the babies slept, a white bull with bells around its neck came to the door of the ashram; a large kite flew around flapping its large wings; and a lovely swan with a lotus in its mouth landed in the garden. Soon some lovely looking puppies also trooped in wagging their tails. Along

with them came a cobra with its hood spread out. While this miraculous scene was being enacted, Narada came in playing the *Nilambari* raga on his veena. He was followed by the three Devis - Lakshmi, Parvati, and Saraswati.

Narada greeted Anasuya and said,



"Mother, these ladies have come in search of their three husbands here because all the animals associated with them have made their way here. Could you please help them?"

Anasuya welcomed them and asked them to identify their husbands from the three babies lying in the cradle. Seeing that the babies were looking



similar, the three Devis hesitated, not knowing which one to pick up. Narada gently taunted them asking, "Can't you recognise your own husbands?"

So the three Devis went about picking up a baby each. At once they assumed their original forms and the three Devis found that they had picked up the wrong babies and they went away in utter confusion. Immediately, the gods assumed their single form of the Trimurti. Sage Atreya also returned to the ashram at this point. As the Rishi folded his hands in prayer, the Trimurti assumed the form of Dattatreya and became the son of Atreya and Anasuya.

Narada described this beautiful form in a song. He sang that Nandi the bull would accompany Dattatreya as a calf. The Vedas in the form of four dogs would be with him always. The snake, kite, and swan would be his

mounts and Dattatreya in the form of a Maharishi would wander in the forests gathering knowledge and wisdom. All the sages and seers of the world would revere him. He would be worshipped by the Hayahaya dynasty. This is how Karth Arjun began worshipping

Dattatreya and became a very powerful king.

Jamadagni was also a famous Rishi of those times. His youngest son was called Rama. He always held an axe in his hand and wandered around looking after the ashram and clearing for-

ests for cultivation. Rama had meditated long and hard in the Himalayas. Siva appeared before him and gave him a very powerful axe. He, therefore, came to be called Parasurama, for *parasu* means axe. He was also called Bhargavarama because he belonged to the Bhargava clan. Parasurama was actually the sixth avatar of Vishnu.

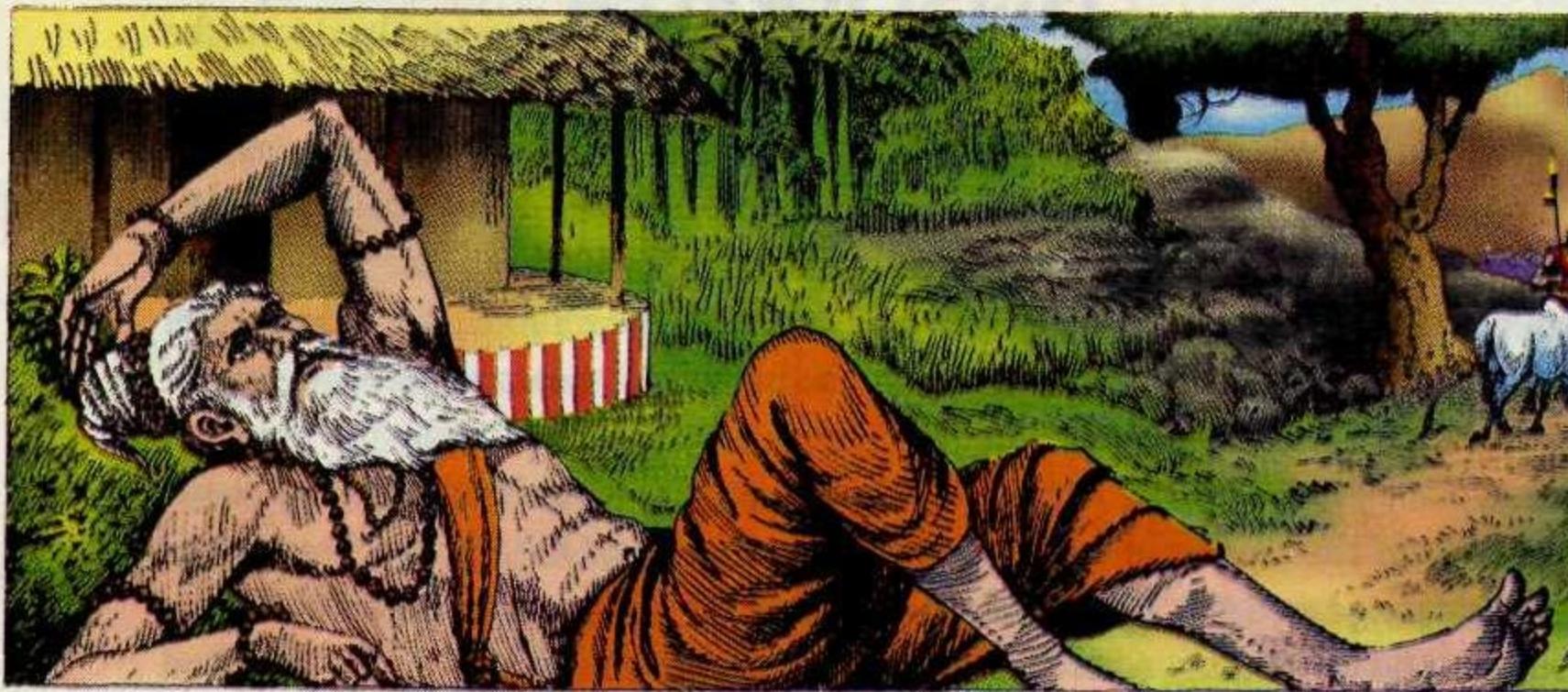


One day, Parasurama's mother Renuka went to the river for a bath and did not return for a long time. Her husband Jamadagni, with his yogic power, was able to see her there. He saw that she was absorbed in watching a Gandharva called Chitrath playing in the water with some Apsaras. This angered him greatly and as soon as she returned, he turned to his eldest son and asked him to cut off his mother's head. He refused to do such a terrible act. None of the other sons would do it as well. By then Parasurama returned from the forest. As soon as he came in, his father asked him to behead his mother and all the brothers. Without any hesitation he carried out his father's orders. Jamadagni was very pleased with him and told him he could ask for any boon that he wanted. Parasurama immediately asked that his mother and bro-

thers be brought back to life. A pleased Jamadagni did just that and blessed Parasurama.

In the meantime, Karth Arjun had completed his victory tour and was on his way to his capital Mahishmati. He stopped at Jamadagni's ashram to rest. Jamadagni had a cow that was an incarnation of the divine Kamadhenu. It could produce whatever was needed to entertain and feed any number of guests. Making use of the cow, Jamadagni was able to entertain Karth Arjun and his army lavishly. Karth Arjun wanted the cow for himself. As he was leaving the ashram, he asked his soldiers to take the cow along with them. Jamadagni refused to part with the cow but the soldiers just pushed him down roughly and dragged away the cow.

(To continue)



THE MYSTIFYING CREATURE OF THE LAND OF SNOWS

It was a cold and snowy day in 1938. Captain d'Auvergue, Curator of the Victoria Memorial, in Calcutta, was trekking the mountains of the great Himalayas. Indeed, he must have been a brave and adventurous man to do so all alone. But alas, because of heavy snowfall and freezing climate, he not only became snow-blind but also seriously ill. Then, so goes the story, he was rescued by a giant creature, which surprisingly nursed him back to health. Soon, a bewildered Captain d'Auvergue was well enough to return home by himself.

Who was this benevolent creature that saved his life? Where did it come from? Legends of yore call it the Yeti, which in Tibetan means "magical creature", and no doubt, its existence is a baffling mystery. It is also known as *metohkangmi*, meaning the abominable snowman.

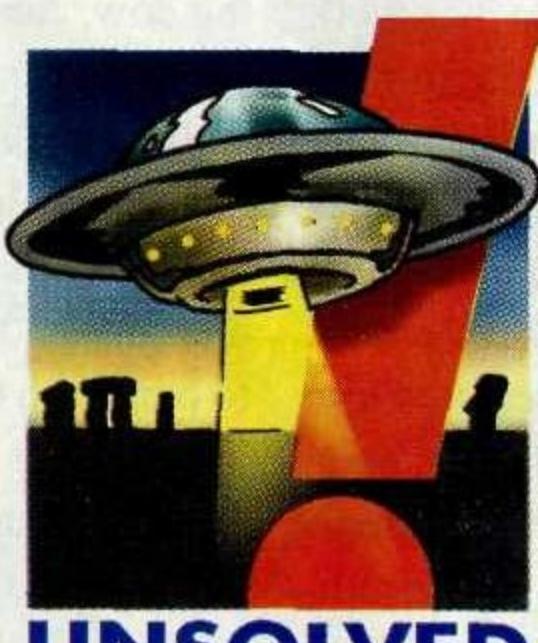
It is in the upper reaches of the highest range on earth, the Himalayas, remote and forbidding, where few men

dare to tread, that these enigmatic creatures are said to roam, leaving behind their footprints in the snow. The Yeti is heavily built like a large gorilla, with features resembling those of a human being. It is biped, walks on two legs as men do, and stands tall to a height of 7 to 9 feet and may weigh up to 350

pounds, and its average life-span is presumed to be between 120 and 130 years. It has got large feet and hands, sparkling eyes, and a hairy body. It is reported to be very friendly, but very shy indeed, and above all a peaceful creature.

The Yeti is supposed to have evolved from the "caveman" and has found mention in ancient

folklore as the "wild man of the woods". So it is argued that the Yeti must have existed in the remote past and may still be inhabiting the unexplored regions of the earth. But no conclusive physical evidence has yet been found to prove its existence. Only reports have come in the form of tracks on the snow, shapes seen in the distance, and a high pitched



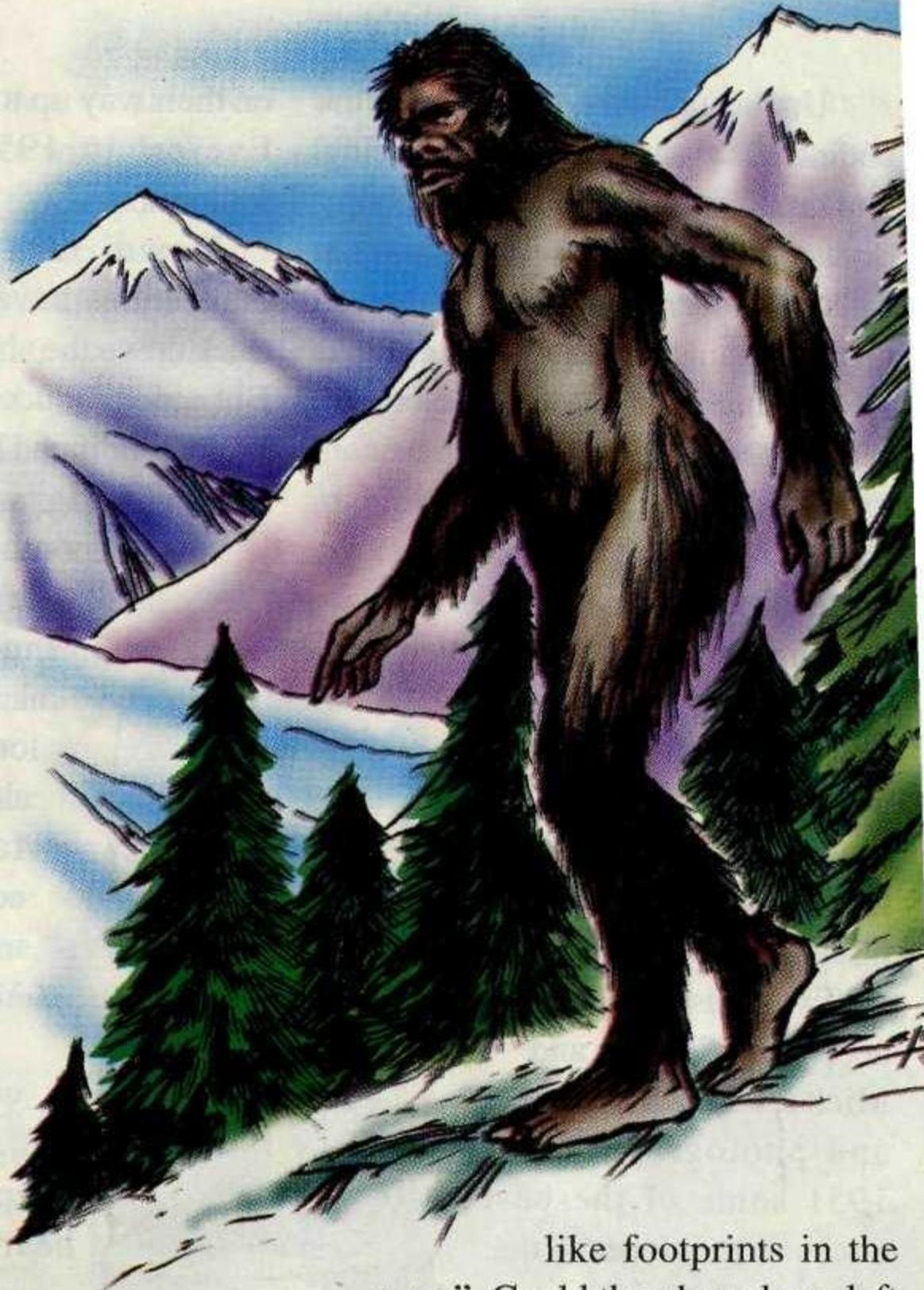
UNSOLVED MYSTERIES



whistling sound heard in uninhabited regions. Researchers, who have gone looking for the abominable snowman, have never met one. Though, occasionally, local people during their daily lives are said to have stumbled into an unknown creature which they suppose to be the Yeti.

The earliest known sighting took place in 1832 when B.H. Hodson, the first British Resident of the Court of Nepal, reported that his native hunters were frightened away by a wild man that "moved erectly, was covered in long, dark hair, and had no tail."

A British Major, Alan Cameron, and his team were on an expedition to the Everest in 1923 when one of the guides pointed out an unusual sight. A line of upright creatures was moving along a cliff face high above the snowline. Two days later when they reached the spot, they were amazed to find "huge, human-



like footprints in the snow". Could they have been left behind by the legendary wild man?

But the first authentic report of the Yeti is supposed to have come from N.A. Tombazi, a Greek photographer and member of the Royal Geographical Society. During his expedition in the Himalayas in 1925, he was shown a creature moving in the distance almost a thousand feet away at an altitude of 15,000 ft. on the Zemu Glacier.



"Unquestionably, the figure in the outline was exactly like a human being, walking upright and stopping occasionally to uproot or pull at some dwarf rhododendron bushes. It showed up dark against the snow and, as far as I could make out wore no clothes," recounted Tombazi of the extraordinary sight.

Unfortunately, before he could click his camera, the creature just disappeared and was never seen again. Later, footprints that were shaped like those of a man, complete with five distinct toes, were discovered in the area.

Two British mountaineers, Eric Shipton and Michael Ward, found and photographed in 1951 some of the best tracks on the slopes of the Menlung Glacier, between Tibet and Nepal, at an altitude of 20,000ft. The giant footprints were very distinct and measured 13 inches wide and 18 inches long. Later, scientists studying the picture concluded that the footprints did not belong to any known creature but definitely to a two-legged one. Even Sir Edmund Hillary and his Sherpa guide, Tenzing Norgay,

on their way up to conquer the Mount Everest in 1953, found similar footprints.

Down the years numerous expeditions have been organised to track down the abominable snowman. But none has succeeded so far. In 1960,

Sir Edmund Hillary and Desmond

Doig went on one such sponsored adventures. They were equipped with special modern cameras. But alas, despite a ten-month long sojourn in the high altitude mountains, they failed to find any convincing clues to the mystery of the elusive Yeti.

A mountaineer while camping near Mt. Annapurna in Nepal, in 1970, suddenly heard a strange, shrill noise. Later, he discovered tracks on the ground. Then looking through his binoculars he saw an

unusual, human-like creature moving away in the distance. Was it a Yeti that was trying to communicate through a bizarre sound?

In 1974, a Sherpa village girl was grazing her yaks in the Everest region of



This statue at Willow Creek, California, is 8ft. tall.
Sculpture by Jim McClarin.



Tibet. Suddenly, she was startled by a large ape-like creature with black and brown hair toddling towards her. She screamed at the top of her voice and the creature, turning back, killed some of her yaks and disappeared. Its behaviour was indeed unlike that of a Yeti which is reputed to have a non-violent and gentle nature. Later, distinct tracks were found in the area.

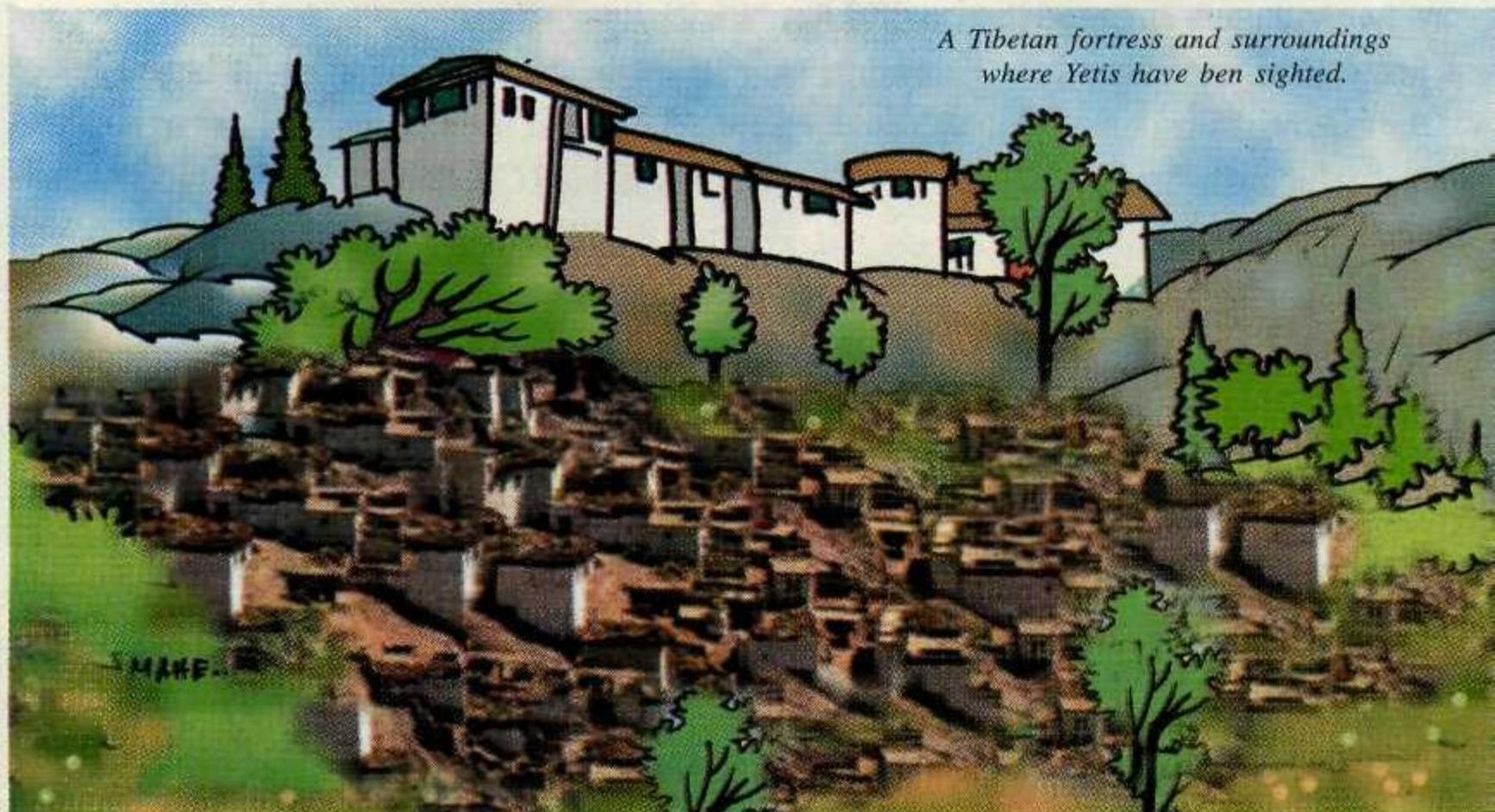
In other parts of the world, too, people tell each other about a mysterious, hairy human-like creature. In the United States of America, it is called 'Bigfoot', in Canada 'Sasquatch' and in Mongolia 'Alma'. But no convincing proofs have yet been found to support its existence.

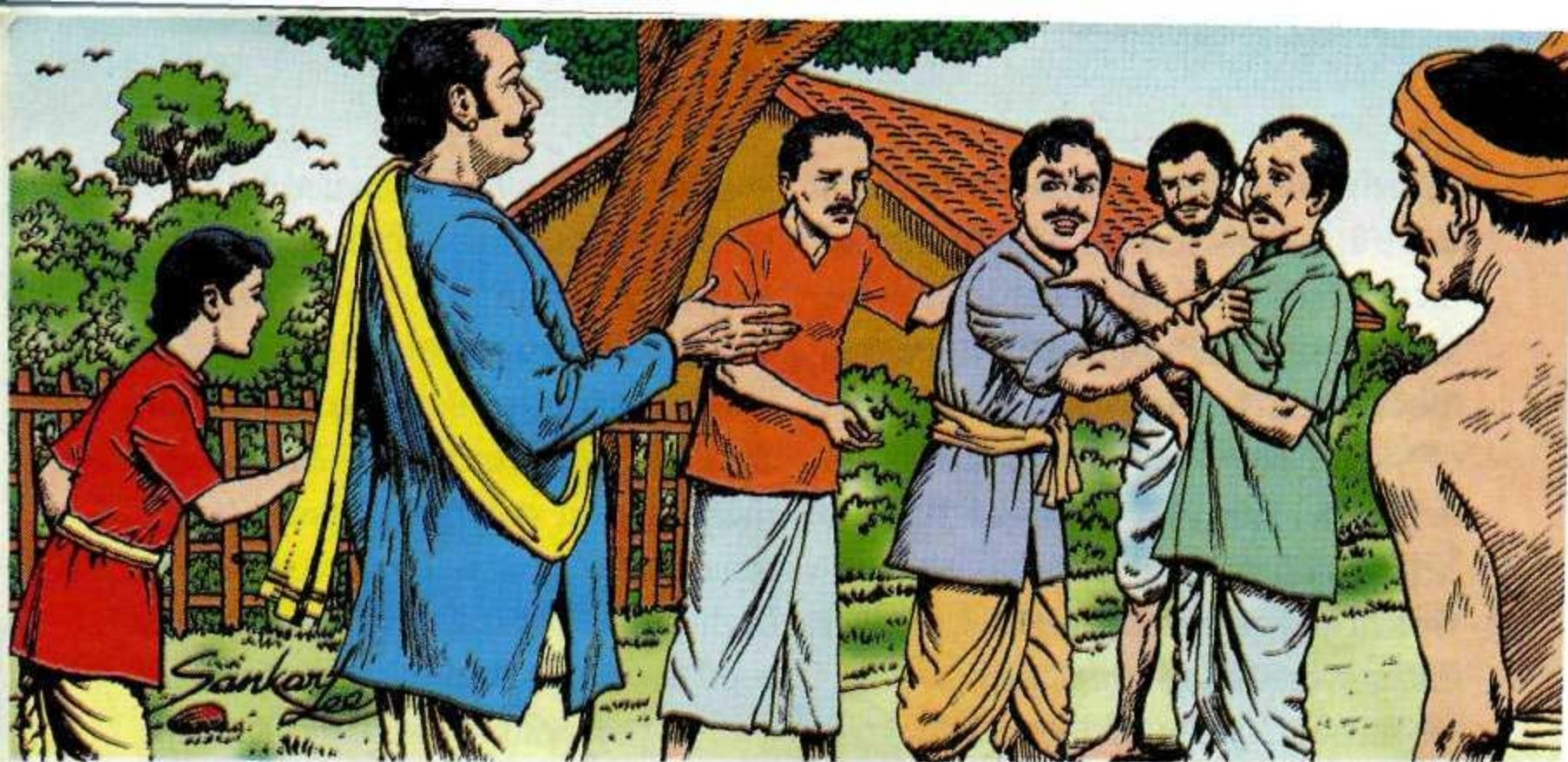
A British wildlife biologist, Dr. Shaun

William-Doe, who has studied the Yetis for 16 years, claims to be in touch with a group of them. He says, the abominable snowmen are basically loners and only meet with each other once every seven years. They send messages in the language of cries, moans, and whistles. Various low and high-pitched screams and moans are used to convey the date, time, and the place of meeting. For example a long deep moan means in the Yeti dialect R.S.V.P. (*repondez s'il vous plait*) reply, if you please.

But does the Yeti really exist in the barren, frozen, untrodden regions of the great Himalayas? Or is it just an occasional extraterrestrial visitor to planet earth?

A Tibetan fortress and surroundings where Yetis have been sighted.





FORGETFULNESS

Jagannath was a prominent person of Jaunpur. The villagers had great respect for him. There was none who would not accept his word of advice. One day, he was on his way to his farm when he saw two villagers engaged in a quarrel. A few others were also there listening to the quarrel, but not intervening in the dispute. Jagannath went near them and asked: "What's the matter?"

The two fellows fell silent on seeing Jagannath. They approached him. One of them, Narayan, said: "Sir, this man Chandru's wife and my wife are from the same village. Three months ago he was on a visit to the village when my brother-in-law met him and handed a thousand rupees to be given to me on his return. Till now he has not given me that money. In fact, I knew about the

money only the other day, and went to him and asked for the money together with interest for three months. He told me he would pay only the thousand but no interest. Don't you think he's being unfair?"

"It's true that his brother-in-law handed me that money to be given to him," explained Chandru, "but, sir, after I came back I got busy and completely forgot about the money. I told him I would give him the money, but he's insisting on my paying interest, too. Isn't *that* unfair?"

"Forgetfulness is very common, don't you think so, Narayan?" Jagannath tried to comfort the villager. "Do you know what happened to me today? I went to the pond for a bath and forgot to take back my gold chain I had kept



on the steps. In fact, I remembered it only now, after listening to you. So, don't try to take advantage of someone's forgetfulness. You receive that thousand rupees and don't insist on any interest being paid for the lapse."

Narayan and Chandru accepted Jagannath's advice. When he went back home after visiting his farm, his wife asked him: "I had sent your gold chain to you, didn't you get it?" On seeing Jagannath looking aghast, she explained: "A young man came here, saying you had left the chain on the steps of the pond and you wanted it to be sent over to you."

Jagannath then told his wife all that had happened on his way to the farm and how he was explaining his own forgetfulness. "Must be one of those villagers who was listening to the

quarrel. He cleverly made use of what he heard from me and made you pick up the chain and give it to him. It's as good as lost, thanks to my forgetfulness!"

Just then a youngster came in holding a chain. "I'm Manohar," he introduced himself. "I was listening to your narration about the chain. I was wondering if you, who go about tendering advice to the villagers, too are given to forgetfulness. I wanted to find out whether you had really forgotten about the chain. That's why I came here and told your wife a lie and got hold of the chain. I'm now convinced that forgetfulness is very common. Please forgive me for resorting to a ruse. Here's the chain."

Jagannath took back the chain with a smile.



Creative Contest

Given below is the beginning of a story; it has all the ingredients of turning out to be an interesting tale. But that 'creation' is in YOUR hands! You have to imagine the sequences — possible and probable — and give a finish to the story. Not only finish it, but think up a catchy title (heading), too. Remember, you have to do this exercise in 200 to 250 words. The best entry will get an attractive prize, and the entry will also be published in the magazine. The contest is meant for our young readers. Please remember to mention your name, age, class, name of school, and home address with PIN Code. Prove that YOU can write better than grown-ups; so, don't take their help!

Here goes the story:

Virbabu was a young farmer of Vikrampuri. He led a happy and contented life. He had a piece of fertile land, on which he laboured hard to produce crops which fetched him a good price in the market. No wonder then that he guarded his land and the crops most jealously.

One year, there was not enough rain, and the crops withered away. Not only that, because of the famine, whatever crops he had saved were plundered. The following year, fortunately, there was adequate rain, the fields were a-smiling and gave a rich yield. Virbabu's farm had an especially good crop of maize.

Remembering the previous year's experience, he erected a hut in a corner of his field from where he could

keep a watch on the crops. One night, he thought he had heard some unusual noises and voices from the farm, and was sure of the presence of some intruders. A staff in hand, he ran out to accost them.

There were four persons merrily cutting away the maize. In the dim moonlight, he recognised them. They were from a nearby village. One was a Brahmin, another a goldsmith, a third a moneylender, and the fourth was a farmer like himself.

He was scared of facing them alone. He also did not wish to shout for help, they might run away. He thought of a different strategy. He threw away the staff and approached them confidently.

How do you think Virbabu tackled each of them? Did they feel ashamed of their nefarious act? Your entry must be convincing; and don't forget to give a title to the story. Write "Creative Contest" on top of your entry, which should reach us by December 20, 2000.

— Editor

Answers to Discovery of India Quiz (November 2000) :

1. (a) Sudama, also known as Kuchela; (b) Prahlada; (c) Dhruva;
(d) Rohitashwa, the son of King Harishchandra and Queen Shaivya;
(e) Abhimanyu.
2. Meykandar and Sadashiva Acharya, respectively.



The guru's advice

Among the entries received for the CREATIVE CONTEST (August 2000), the one sent by M.Sushma (14 years-Class10), Guntur, has been chosen for a cash prize of Rs100. Her entry appears below in Italics. - Editor

A group of pupils had completed their studies in a gurukul and were getting ready to go back home. At the time of taking leave of the *muni*, he blessed them as they prostrated before him one by one. The last pupil was Rajan, who happened to be the guru's favourite. But while all the others had finished the curriculum with merit, Rajan had disappointed him.

"I hardly know what to say, Rajan," the muni said with a heavy heart. "In some ways, you're above the others, but somehow I've failed to make you a good scholar."

Rajan, who realised his shortcomings, looked downcast. "I'm sorry, guru, but I'm grateful to you for all the guidance you gave me," he said, as he got up to receive the muni's blessings.

"Never mind, my boy," said the guru with a smile. "I shall give you three golden rules for you to follow. First, keep on trying till you achieve your objective. Second, if you ask a sufficient number of questions, you will obtain the answer. Lastly, if you think twice before you act, you won't make mistakes. If you remember my advice, you will do well in life."

Armed with this advice, Rajan set out to make his fortune.

But Rajan could not easily find a means of livelihood. He sought help from his friends who, though well settled, only scoffed at him. He felt very bad. He then remembered his guru's first advice. He started a small business which grew slowly through his sheer toil. Soon he paid off all his debts and made a small fortune.

He now thought of rearing a family and married Rajani. He found her obedient, kind, and generous. Her brother Krishna joined them when they set up house. Rajan took him as a partner in his business. But Krishna was dishonest and cunning. Ambitious, he began making a fortune for himself, through dubious means. He was caught by the authorities, but he put all the blame on Rajan, who found himself in prison.

After a long prison term, Rajan returned home. He found Rajani as beautiful as ever, but he had the shock of his life when he saw a handsome youngster in the house. He went away in a huff. He wandered aimlessly for a couple of days and then remembered his guru's second advice. He went back to meet some of his neighbours who, in reply to his queries, told him that Rajani had driven away her brother when she came to know that he had played all the mischief. Also that the young man was none else than his own son, who had grown up under the care of his mother Rajani.

Rajan was now full of remorse and returned home to apologise to Rajani who could understand the agony that raged in his mind after long years of jail life. She told him how she was trying to explain things but he had no patience to listen to her at that moment. She also told him that because of all the sudden developments, she did not tell him that she was bearing his child while he was being led to the prison.

Rajan realized that he had forgotten his guru's third advice, at the knick of time.



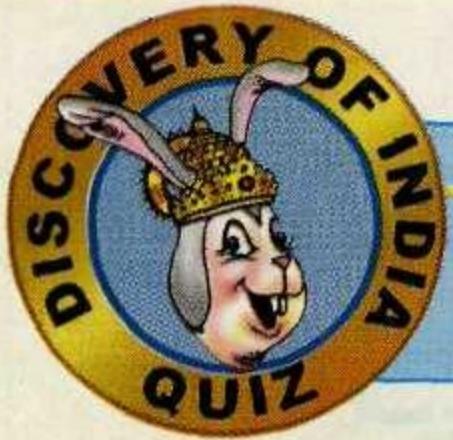
Let us know



- * **In the phrase “across the seven seas”, which are the seas referred to?**
- *Anil Merani, on e-mail*
They are the Arctic and Antarctic Seas, the North and South Atlantic Oceans, the North and South Pacific Oceans, and the Indian Ocean.
- * **Schools often include the torch in their symbols or logos. What is the significance?**
- *Lokenath Pande, Kanpur*
In pre-historic times, fire was important to a tribe or family group, which generally kept a torch burning throughout the day and night. When it was needed, fire could be taken from the torch. Care was taken to ensure that the torch never went out. As fire gives out physical light, learning is supposed to give light to the mind, or let us say, knowledge. We learn out of the total learning of people who have preceded us, and we pass our knowledge to the generation following us - like the Olympic torch which is passed on from one person to another.
- * **Is the horse of Indian origin?**
- *Parvathi Menon, Kasargod*
The general belief is that the country did not have horses till the Aryans brought them when they entered India. Wide excavations at Surkotada, in the Kutch district of Gujarat, have brought out conclusive evidence that the horse was very much there at the time of the Harappan Civilization (2500-1500 B.C.). Hence the common expression the Harappan horse.
- * **Is it true that a crab can really grow a new claw?**
- *Pramod Sahni, Delhi*
As a crab grows, it casts its shell from time to time and a new and bigger one is formed. While doing so, it may lose one of its claws; sometimes, during a fight with another crab, it will lose a limb. Soon, a new claw starts growing. Isn't it a wonder of Nature?
- * **Where can the traveller's tree be found?**

- *Satyavati Sinha, Calcutta*
The traveller's tree is found only in Madagascar. It looks like the plantain (banana) tree. At the base of the leaf stalks are cup-like sheaths that hold water. A traveller has only to cut open the sheath to take the water and quench his thirst. Hence the name. The tree has leaves 5 or 6 ft. long, growing in a fan shape at the end of the stalks, which reach almost 7 or 8 feet high.

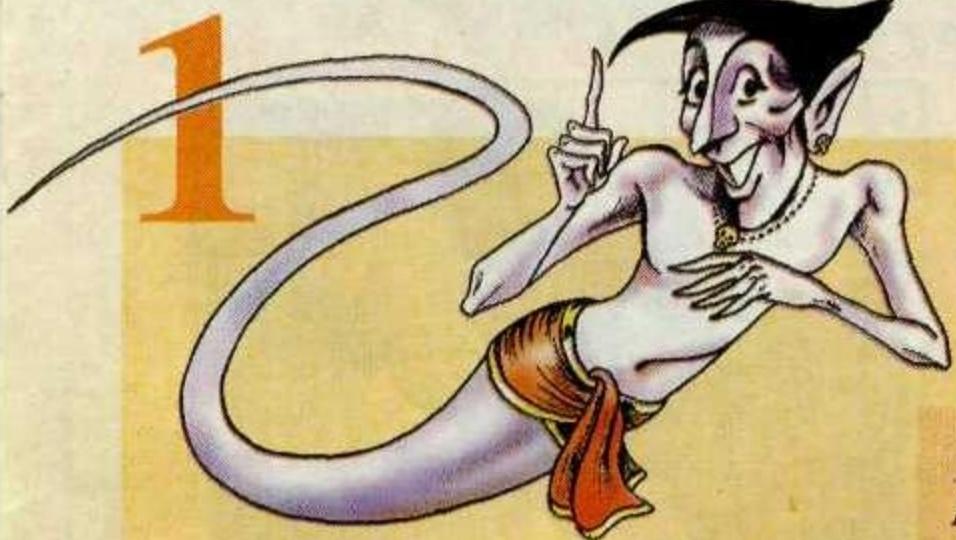




CHANDAMAMA

ENRICH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Answers to the quiz published in this issue will appear in the next issue. Meanwhile, try to find the answers yourself and enrich your knowledge of India's antiquity and heritage.



- 1
- (a) Which part of the Indian continent was Videha, the kingdom ruled by Janaka, father of Sita? Where was its capital, Mithila, situated?
 - (b) Which part of India was called Koshala in ancient times and where was its capital Shravasti, situated?
 - (c) Where was Vaishali, the land inhabited by the Lichhavis?
 - (d) Where was Toshali, the kingdom of the ancient Kalinga?
 - (e) Where was the land of Gandhara?

A young Brahmin lost his way in a forest and was led to the house of the chief of the tribals. After some time, he married the daughter of the chief and continued to stay there. He observed that every day, early in the morning, the chief went out with a handful of flowers to come back after an hour. He learnt from his wife that in a secret cave remained a mysterious deity whom his father's ancestors had worshipped for generations. The young man insisted on being led there. He was led blindfold, but he secretly carried a handful of mustard seeds which he went on dropping along the way. After the monsoon the seeds sprouted. One day, the young man found his way to the cave and picked up the object his father-in-law worshipped and left the forest for his city. The king placed the sacred object in a newly made image which is still worshipped in a great temple of India.

Which is the temple, and what is the name of the deity? Who was the young man and who was the tribal chief and who was the young man's wife? What was the name of the king enshrined in the deity what the young man had brought?

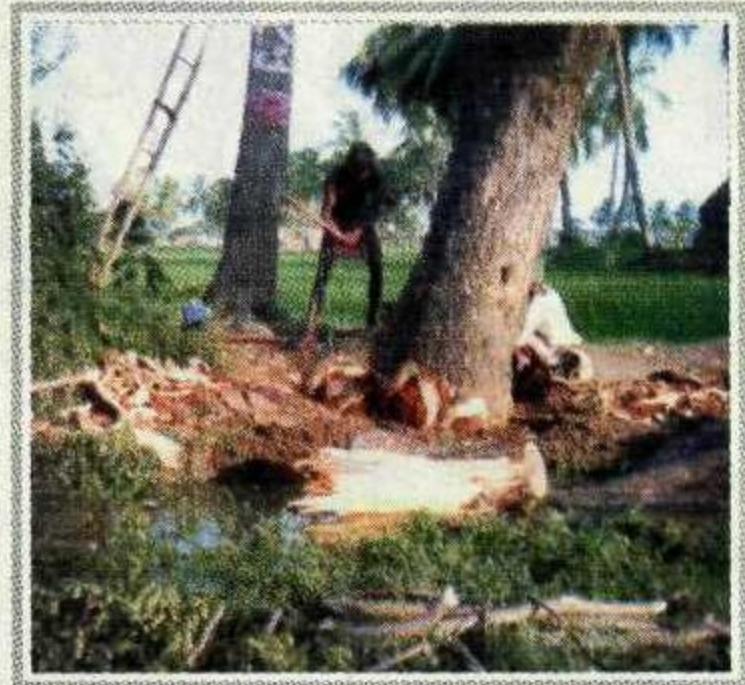
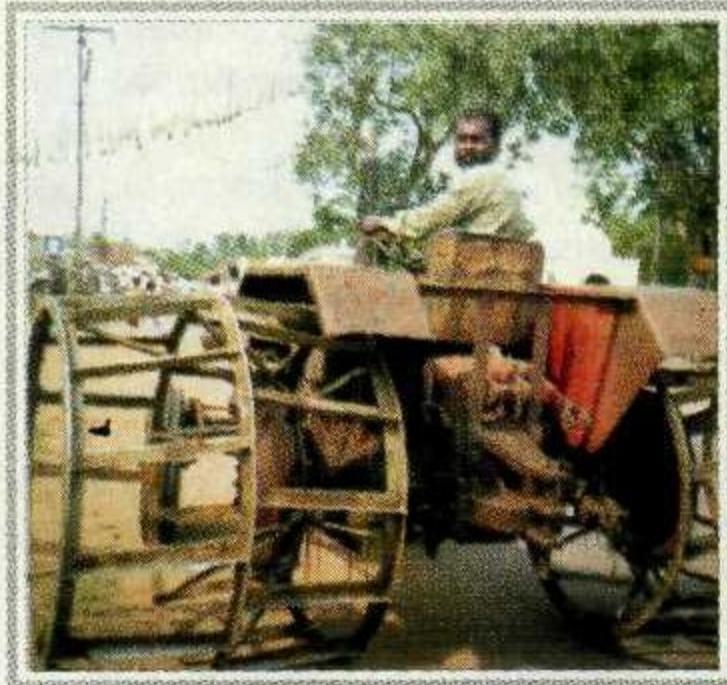




PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

Can you formulate a caption in a few words, to suit these pictures related to each other?
You may write it on a competition post card and mail it to:

**Photo Caption Contest, CHANDAMAMA
(at the address given below)**



to reach us before the 25th of the current month. A reward of Rs. 100/- will go to the best entry which will be published in the issue after the next.

CONGRATULATIONS



The Prize for the October 2000 contest goes to :

S. VISHNUPRIYA
10-5-39/109, Srichakra Apartments
Masar Tank
Hyderabad - 500 028



The winning entry :
"Aiming high" - "Staying high"

CHANDAMAMA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Within India Rs. 120/- by surface mail

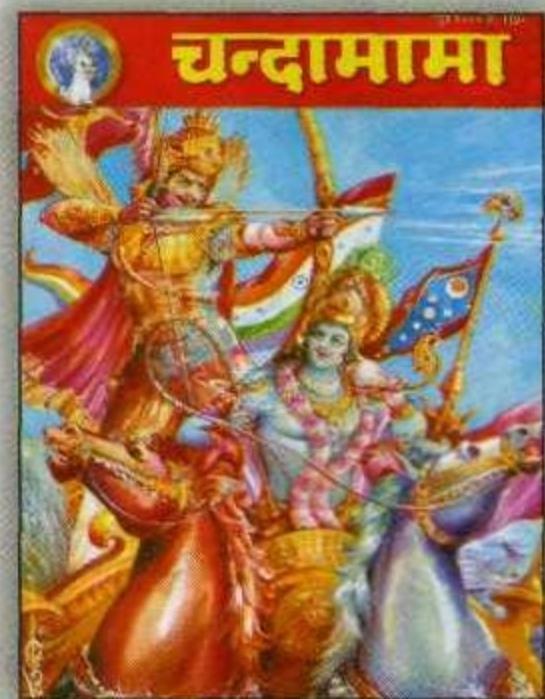
Payment in favour of CHANDAMAMA INDIA LIMITED.

New 82 (Old 92), Defence Officers Colony, Ekkatuthangal, Chennai - 600 097.



MILLENNIUM OFFER

GOODIES for KIDDIES



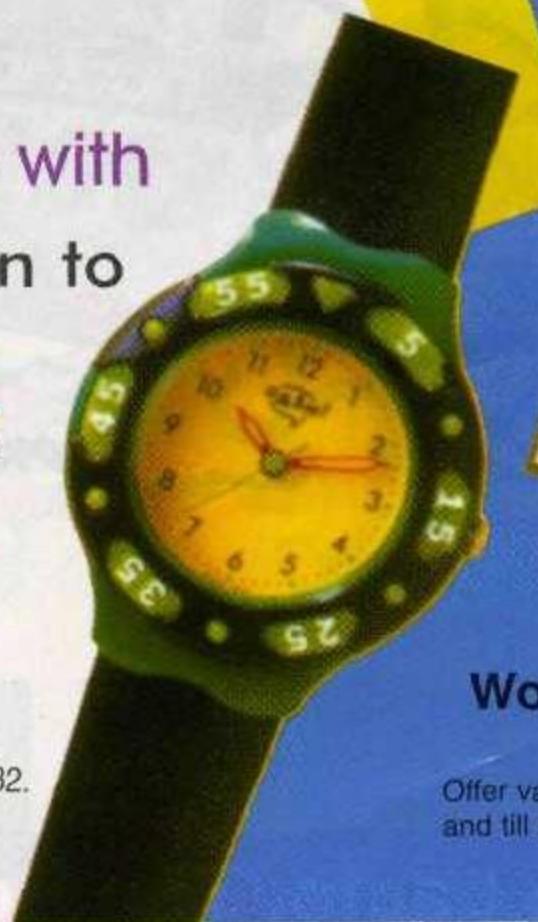
Avail our
Special Gift Offer
before January 1, 2001

A **DASH!** watch free with
3-year subscription to

CHANDAMAMA
AVAILABLE IN 12 LANGUAGES

Remit Rs. 360/- by Draft or M.O favouring
Chandamama India Limited

to:
Publication Division,
Chandamama India Limited,
82, Defence Officers' Colony,
Guindy Industrial Estate P.O., Chennai 600 032.
E-mail: chandamama@vsnl.com



DASH!

Wow watches from

Offer valid on 3-year subscriptions with
and till stocks last. Conditions apply.





CHANDAMAMA (English)

DECEMBER 2000 Registrar of Newspapers, India RN17914/70

Maha Cruise



Nutrime Maha Lacto. The Best Lacto in Town.

